

Official Report of the
One Hundred Seventy-first
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 6 and 7, 2001

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Report of the 171st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 171st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 6, 2001, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 6 and 7, 2001. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 6, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the general priesthood session and the Sunday morning session. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the Saturday morning and afternoon sessions. President James E. Faust conducted the Sunday afternoon session.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and were made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D.

Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

Presidency of the Seventy: Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, David E. Sorensen, Ben B. Banks, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Charles Didier, and Cecil O. Samuelson

First Quorum of the Seventy: Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, Monte J. Brough, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Christofel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L Kofford, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Glenn L. Pace, Carl B. Pratt, Ronald A. Rasband, Lynn G. Robbins, Steven E. Snow, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

Second Quorum of the Seventy: Richard D. Allred, Athos M. Amorín, E. Ray Bateman, L. Edward Brown, Douglas L. Callister, Val R. Christensen, Darwin B. Christenson, Keith Crockett, Adhemar Damiani, Duane B. Gerrard, H. Aldridge Gillespie, Ronald T. Halverson, Keith K. Hilbig, J. Kent Jolley, Dale E. Miller, Earl M. Monson, Merrill C. Oaks, Robert C. Oaks, Robert F. Orton, Stephen B. Oveson, Wayne S. Peterson, Bruce D. Porter, H. Bryan Richards, Ned B. Roueché, R. Conrad Schultz, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, Robert R. Steuer, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, Jerald L. Taylor, D. Lee Tobler, Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A. West, Robert J. Whet-

ten, Richard H. Winkel, Robert S. Wood, and H. Ross Workman

Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, area, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 6, 2001, at 10:00 A.M. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist. To begin this session, the choir sang "Come, Listen to a Prophet's Voice." President Monson then made the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand at the overflow locations in the Tabernacle and the Assembly Hall. We likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies seated on the stand in the Conference Center.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

We are also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Internet at lds.org.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Come, Listen to a Prophet's Voice" and will now favor us with "The Lord Is My Light." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Dennis B. Neuenchwander of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir sang "The Lord Is My Light."

Elder Dennis B. Neuenchwander offered the invocation.

President Monson

It will now be our privilege to hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Blessings of living in the fulness of times

My beloved brethren and sisters, wherever you may be, welcome to this great world conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We are assembled in our wonderful new Conference Center in Salt Lake City. This building is filled or soon will be. I am so glad that we have it. I am so thankful for the inspiration to build it. What a remarkable structure it is. I wish all of us could be assembled under one roof. But that is not possible. I am so deeply thankful that we have the wonders of television, radio, cable, satellite transmission, and the Internet. We have become a great worldwide Church, and it is now possible for the vast majority of our members to participate in these meetings as one great family, speaking many languages, found in many lands, but all of one faith and one doctrine and one baptism.

This morning I can scarcely restrain my emotions as I think of what the Lord has done for us.

I do not know what we did in the pre-existence to merit the wonderful blessings we enjoy. We have come to earth in this great season in the long history of mankind. It is a marvelous age, the best of all. As we reflect on the plodding course of mankind, from the time of our first parents, we cannot help feeling grateful.

The era in which we live is the fulness of times spoken of in the scriptures, when God has brought together all of the elements of previous dispensations. From the day that He and His Beloved Son manifested themselves to the boy Joseph, there has been a tremendous cascade of enlightenment poured out upon the world. The hearts of men have turned to their fathers in fulfillment of the words of Malachi. The vision of Joel has been fulfilled wherein the Lord declared:

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all

flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

"And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

"And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.

"The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.

"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call" (Joel 2:28-32).

There has been more of scientific discovery during these years than during all of the previous history of mankind. Transportation, communication, medicine, public hygiene, the unlocking of the atom, the miracle of the computer, with all of its ramifications, have blossomed forth, particularly in our own era. During my own lifetime, I have witnessed miracle after wondrous miracle come to pass. We take it for granted.

And with all of this, the Lord has restored His ancient priesthood. He has organized His Church and kingdom during the past century and a half. He has led His people. They have been tempered in the crucible of terrible persecution. He has brought to pass the wondrous time in which we now live.

We have seen only the foreshadowing of the mighty force for good that this Church will become. And yet I marvel at what has been accomplished.

Our membership has grown. I believe it has grown in faithfulness. We lose too many, but the faithful are so strong. Those who observe us say that we are moving into the mainstream of religion. We are

not changing. The world's perception of us is changing. We teach the same doctrine. We have the same organization. We labor to perform the same good works. But the old hatred is disappearing; the old persecution is dying. People are better informed. They are coming to realize what we stand for and what we do.

A time of greater evil than ever before

But wonderful as this time is, it is fraught with peril. Evil is all about us. It is attractive and tempting and in so many cases successful. Paul declared:

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

"For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

"Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

"Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

We see today all of these evils, more commonly and generally, than they have ever been seen before, as we have so recently been reminded by what has occurred in New York City, Washington, and Pennsylvania, of which I shall speak tomorrow morning. We live in a season when fierce men do terrible and despicable things. We live in a season of war. We live in a season of arrogance. We live in a season of wickedness, pornography, immorality. All of the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah haunt our society. Our young people have never faced a greater challenge. We have never seen more clearly the lecherous face of evil.

This work will go forward

And so, my brothers and sisters, we are met together in this great conference

to fortify and strengthen one another, to help and lift one another, to give encouragement and build faith, to reflect on the wonderful things the Lord has made available to us, and to strengthen our resolve to oppose evil in whatever form it may take.

We have become as a great army. We are now a people of consequence. Our voice is heard when we speak up. We have demonstrated our strength in meeting adversity. Our strength is our faith in the Almighty. No cause under the heavens can stop the work of God. Adversity may raise its ugly head. The world may be troubled with wars and rumors of wars, but this cause will go forward.

You are familiar with these great words written by the Prophet Joseph:

"No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done" (*History of the Church*, 4:540).

The Lord has given us the goal toward which we work. That goal is to build His kingdom, which is a mighty cause of great numbers of men and women of faith, of integrity, of love and concern for mankind, marching forward to create a better society, bringing blessings upon ourselves and upon the heads of others.

Bless all humanity by reaching out

As we recognize our place and our goal, we cannot become arrogant. We cannot become self-righteous. We cannot become smug or egotistical. We must reach out to all mankind. They are all sons and daughters of God our Eternal Father, and He will hold us accountable for what we do concerning them.

May the Lord bless us. May He make us strong and mighty in good works. May our faith shine forth as the sunlight of the morning. May we walk in obedience to His divine commandments. May He smile with favor upon us.

As we go forward, may we bless humanity with an outreach to all, lifting those who are downtrodden and oppressed, feeding and clothing the hungry and the needy, extending love and neighborliness to those about us who may not be part of this Church. The Lord has shown us the way. He has given us His word, His counsel, His guidance, yea, His commandments. We have done well. We have much to be grateful for and much to be proud of. But we can do better, so much better.

How I love you, my brothers and sisters of this great cause. I love you for what you have become and for what you can become. Notwithstanding the afflictions about us, notwithstanding the sordid things we see almost everywhere, notwithstanding the conflict that sweeps across the world, we can be better.

I invoke the blessings of heaven upon you as I express my love for you and com-

mend to you the great messages you will hear from this pulpit during the next two days, and do so in the sacred name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Baptism."

President Monson

We have just listened to President Gordon B. Hinckley, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing the musical selection "Baptism."

We shall now hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Charles Didier of the Presidency of the Seventy. The choir and congregation will then sing "Now Let Us Rejoice."

At the conclusion of the singing, Sister Sheri L. Dew, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, will address us. She will be followed by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

Thank you, President Hinckley, for your great message. We are all profoundly grateful for your vigorous and inspired leadership in this difficult time. Under that leadership, we are going forward with the work of the Lord, so urgently needed in this troubled world.

Sharing the gospel

To proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a fundamental principle of the Christian faith. Three of the gospel writers report this direction by the Savior.

The book of Mark records:

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16).

Matthew quotes the Savior's command, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19).

Luke states, "Thus it is written . . . that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations" (Luke 24:46-47).

Applying the Savior's directions to our day, modern prophets have challenged each of us to share the gospel.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has given the clarion call for our time. In a worldwide satellite address to missionaries and local leaders, he asked for "an infusion of enthusiasm" for missionary work "at every level in the Church" ("Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep," *Ensign*, May 1999, 107). Though missionaries must continue their best efforts to find persons to teach, he declared that the "better way . . . is through the members of the Church" (105). He asked each of us to give our very best efforts to assisting missionaries in finding persons to teach. He also asked that each stake president and each bishop "accept full responsibility and accountability for the finding and friendship of investigators" within their units (107). President Hinckley also invoked the blessings of the Lord upon each of us "in meeting the tremendous challenge that is ours" (108).

Though it has been two and a half years since our president made this plea, most of us have not yet acted effectively upon his challenge.

As I have prayerfully studied President Hinckley's words and pondered over how we can share the gospel, I have concluded that we need three things to fulfill our prophet's challenge. First, we need a sincere *desire* to share the gospel. Second, we need *divine assistance*. Third, we need *to know what to do*.

I. Desire

As with so many other things, sharing the gospel begins with *desire*. If we are to become more effective instruments in the hands of the Lord in sharing His gospel, we must sincerely *desire* to do so. I believe we acquire this desire in two steps.

First, we must have a firm testimony of the truth and importance of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. This in-

cludes the supreme value of God's plan for His children, the essential position of the Atonement of Jesus Christ in it, and the role of The Church of Jesus Christ in carrying out that plan in mortality.

Second, we must have a love for God and for all of His children. In modern revelation we are told that "love, with an eye single to the glory of God, [qualifies us] for the work" (D&C 4:5). The early Apostles of this dispensation were told that their love should "abound unto all men" (D&C 112:11).

From our testimony of the truth and importance of the restored gospel, we understand the value of what we have been given. From our love of God and our fellowmen, we acquire our desire to share that great gift with everyone. The intensity of our desire to share the gospel is a great indicator of the extent of our personal conversion.

The Book of Mormon contains some marvelous examples of the effect of testimony and love. When the sons of Mosiah, who had been "the very vilest of sinners," acquired their testimony, "they were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish" (Mosiah 28:3-4). In a later account, their associate Alma cried, "O that I were an angel, . . . that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth" and declare "the plan of redemption" to every soul, "that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth" (Alma 29:1-2).

I like to refer to missionary efforts as sharing the gospel. The word *sharing* affirms that we have something extraordinarily valuable and desire to give it to others for their benefit and blessing.

The most effective missionaries, member and full-time, always act out of love. I learned this lesson as a young man. I was assigned to visit a less-active member, a successful professional many years older than I. Looking back on my actions,

I realize that I had very little loving concern for the man I visited. I acted out of duty, with a desire to report 100 percent on my home teaching. One evening, close to the end of a month, I phoned to ask if my companion and I could come right over and visit him. His chastening reply taught me an unforgettable lesson.

"No, I don't believe I want you to come over this evening," he said. "I'm tired. I've already dressed for bed. I am reading, and I am just not willing to be interrupted so that you can report 100 percent on your home teaching this month." That reply still stings me because I knew he had sensed my selfish motivation.

I hope no person we approach with an invitation to hear the message of the restored gospel feels that we are acting out of any reason other than a genuine love for them and an unselfish desire to share something we know to be precious.

If we lack this love for others, we should pray for it. The prophet Mormon's writings about "the pure love of Christ" teach us to "pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ" (Moroni 7:47-48).

II. Divine assistance and right timing

We also need divine assistance to guide us in sharing the gospel. Just as our desires must be pure and rooted in testimony and love, our actions must be directed by the Lord. It is His work, not ours, and it must be done in His way and on His timing, not ours. Otherwise, our efforts may be fated to frustration and failure.

All of us have family members or friends who need the gospel but are not now interested. To be effective, our efforts with them must be directed by the Lord so that we act in the way and at the time when they will be most receptive. We must pray for the Lord's help and directions so we can be instruments in His

hands for one who is now ready—one He would have us help today. Then we must be alert to hear and heed the promptings of His Spirit in how we proceed.

Those promptings will come. We know from countless personal testimonies that in His own way and His own time the Lord is preparing persons to accept His gospel. Such persons are searching, and when we are seeking to identify them the Lord will answer their prayers through answering ours. He will prompt and guide those who desire and who sincerely seek guidance in how, where, when, and with whom to share His gospel. In this way, God grants unto us according to our desires (see Alma 29:4; D&C 6:8).

In modern revelation, the Lord's prophet has told us that "there are many yet on the earth among all sects, parties, and denominations, who are blinded . . . and who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it" (D&C 123:12). When we are standing as "witnesses of God at all times and in all things" (Mosiah 18:9), the Lord will open ways for us to find and have appropriate communications with those who are seeking. This will come when we seek direction and when we act out of a sincere and Christlike love for others.

The Lord loves all of His children. He desires that all have the fulness of His truth and the abundance of His blessings. He knows when they are ready, and He wants us to hear and heed His directions on sharing His gospel. When we do so, those who are prepared will respond to the message of Him who said, "My sheep hear my voice, . . . and they follow me" (John 10:27).

III. How to do it

When we have a sincere desire to share the gospel with others, and when we have sought divine assistance in our efforts, what should we do? How do we proceed? We begin by beginning. We should not wait for a further invitation

from heaven. Revelation comes most often when we are on the move.

The Lord has given us this instruction as to *who* and *how*: "And let your preaching be . . . every man to his neighbor, in mildness and in meekness" (D&C 38:41). "Neighbors," of course, means not only those who live beside us and other friends and associates. When He was asked, "Who is my neighbour?" the Savior told of a Samaritan who recognized a neighbor on the road to Jericho (see Luke 10:25-37). Thus, our neighbors also include those we encounter in our daily travels.

We should pray, as Alma of old, for the Lord to give us "power and wisdom that we may bring" our associates to the Lord (Alma 31:35). We also pray for the welfare of their souls (see Alma 6:6).

We must be sure we act out of love and not in any attempt to gain personal recognition or advantage. The warning against those who use Church position to gratify their pride or vain ambition (see D&C 121:37) surely applies to our efforts to share the gospel.

The need to act out of love also warns us against manipulation, real or perceived. People who do not share our belief can be repelled when they hear us refer to something as a "missionary tool." A "tool" is something used to manipulate an inanimate object. If we talk about something as a "missionary tool," we can convey the impression that we want to manipulate someone. That impression is entirely contrary to the unselfish, sharing spirit of our missionary service.

In his great message President Hinckley declares that "opportunities for sharing the gospel are everywhere" (*Ensign*, May 1999, 106). He mentions many things we can do. We should live so that what he called "the tremendous power of the example of a member of the Church" (104) will influence those around us. "The most effective tract we will carry," he said, "will be the goodness of our own lives and

example" (107). We must be sincerely friendly to all.

President Hinckley reminded us that we can "leave a piece of Church literature" (106) with those with whom we come in contact. We can offer our homes "to carry on this missionary service" (105). The missionaries "may appropriately ask the members for referrals" (107), and when they do, we should respond.

In summary, President Hinckley said every member of the Church can "work constantly at the task of finding and encouraging investigators" (107).

There are other things we can do, especially as we act upon the prophet Mormon's great statement, "I fear not what man can do; for perfect love casteth out all fear" (Moroni 8:16; see also 1 John 4:18). We can invite friends to Church meetings or Church-related activities. We can make appreciative references to our Church and the effect of its teachings and ask persons if they would like to know more.

Even easier, we can carry a packet of these attractive pass-along cards and give them to persons—even casual acquaintances—with whom we come in contact in the daily activities of our lives. These cards are an ideal way to invite people to investigate the additional truths we have to share. In a nonintrusive way, they offer something precious, but the gift depends upon the choice and initiative of the potential recipient. In our experience, a significant fraction of those who telephone for the offered gift choose to have it delivered by those who can tell them more.

The Church has just announced another way to share the gospel, worldwide, on the Internet. In its potential, this new initiative is as exciting as the publishing of written tracts in the 19th century and our use of radio, television, and film in the 20th. The Church has activated a new Internet site to which we may refer persons interested in obtaining information about the Church and its doctrine and how they can find a place to worship with us. Its ad-

dress is www.mormon.org. For missionaries, the value and use of this new resource will emerge with experience. For members of the Church, it will help us answer the questions of friends directly or by referring them to the site. It will also allow us to send our friends electronic greeting cards that include gospel messages and invitations.

IV. Conclusion

We have been asked to redouble our efforts and our effectiveness in sharing the gospel to accomplish the Lord's purposes in this great work. Until we do so, these wonderful full-time missionaries—our sons and daughters and our noble as-

sociates in the Lord's work—will remain underused in their great assignment to teach the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

We have spoken about loving desire, heavenly guidance, and ways we can proceed with the divine command to share the gospel with our neighbors. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the brightest light and the only hope for this darkened world. "Wherefore," as Nephi teaches, we "must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men" (2 Nephi 31:20).

I testify of Jesus Christ, our Savior, and of His desire that we join wholeheartedly in this, His work, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Charles Didier

Building a bridge of faith

Entering the offices of a large advertising company, one could read the following thought framed on one of the walls: "Men are building too many walls and not enough bridges" (from JCDcaux, a firm based in France).

Indeed, walls are usually built to separate two or more entities physically, mentally, or even spiritually and to create obstacles. They are built because they represent the idea of defense, protection, or separation. Some walls have acquired fame because of that nature: the walls of Jerusalem, the Great Wall of China, the Wall of Berlin. Walls, as a symbol, are also used in our common vocabulary to reflect this idea of separation, as in "a wall of incomprehension," "a wall of intolerance," or "it is like talking to a brick wall!"

Bridges are the opposite of walls. Bridges are built to bring together, to join two or more entities, and to create unity. They are built to overcome obstacles. Some bridges have become famous, like

the Bridge of Sighs, the Allenby Bridge, and so many others. The term is also used in our language to express the idea of reunion or unity, as in "to bridge a gap" or "to bridge differences."

As we consider our mortal existence on this earth and the purpose of life expressed by Amulek—that "this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God" (Alma 34:32)—what is the Lord's way to help us achieve this very purpose? It is simply, by using this metaphor, to help us build a bridge of faith in our life for crossing and overcoming the walls of unbelief, indifference, fear, or sin. Our mortal life is the time for men to meet God by building a bridge of faith, opening the door into immortality and eternal life.

Building a bridge in Belgium

How do we build such a bridge of faith?

When I was a young man living in a city called Namur in Belgium, there was a large river separating it from an adjacent city on the other side of the river. At that

time, only one bridge connected the two cities. It had been built and rebuilt over the remnants of a bridge built centuries before by the Roman conquerors. It had become too narrow for the traffic, and there were too many small arches to allow the passage of large boats and barges. A new bridge was necessary, wider and with only one arch. The work to establish the foundations soon started on both sides of the river. Rapidly, two huge metallic arms began to stretch from each side with the aim to meet together in the middle of the river. I was fascinated by the engineering and rode my bicycle almost every day to watch the progress of the work.

Finally the day came when the centerpiece, a cornerstone made of steel, was going to link the two arms together. Crowds were now watching with me the delicate operation, the final step that would join the two arms together and permit crossing the bridge for the first time. When it took place, people applauded; workers embraced; the obstacle of the river had been conquered and overcome.

The centerpiece of the bridge of faith

I mention this experience because of the symbolism it represents. The bridge is more than a bridge of metal. It symbolizes the bridge of faith enabling us, children of our Heavenly Father, to meet Him again. The centerpiece of the bridge, the cornerstone, represents the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the Mediator, the link between mortality and immortality, the connection between the natural man and the spiritual man, the change from temporal life to eternal life. It is because of Him that mankind can be reconciled with Heavenly Father and can overcome the walls of sin and mortality—these obstacles that represent spiritual and physical death. The Atonement of Jesus Christ is the centerpiece of the plan of salvation, the promised reunion with our Heavenly

Father, as we read in the book of Moses: “This is the plan of salvation unto all men, through the blood of mine Only Begotten, who shall come in the meridian of time” (Moses 6:62).

The love of God, the other side of the bridge, is the reward of our faith in His Son, Jesus the Christ. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). The greatest of all the gifts of God is the supreme sacrifice of His Son, His Atonement, which brings not only immortality but also eternal life if we keep His commandments and endure to the end (see D&C 14:7).

And so as we attempt to build a bridge of faith, we need to build in our lives a firm testimony of the Father and the Son and His Atonement. This bridge of faith will make a difference between the reality of eternal reunion with our Heavenly Father or eternal separation from Him if we erect walls of sin that turn us away from His love and mercy.

The foundation of the bridge of faith

The gift of the Holy Ghost is the foundation of the bridge of faith. Salvation comes only by Jesus Christ and by our divine exercise of faith in Him, allowing us to repent of our sins and to receive the ordinances of salvation, the railings of the bridge. The inner feelings and promptings to overcome the obstacles of life and to make righteous choices will come by listening to the voice of the Holy Ghost. Crossing the bridge of faith may not be as easy as we may think. A bridge will only resist the storms because of the strength of the pillars of its foundation. Storms in life, crises of faith—such as death, serious illness, loss of a job or financial security—are part of our mortal existence. Sometimes these crises may be exacerbated to the point where one may even question the very existence of a God and of a Savior. A cry for increased faith at such a time will always be answered by the Comforter,

which is the Holy Ghost, a “constant companion, . . . an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth” (D&C 121:46).

Yes, the solutions to our daily problems can always be found by daily seeking, by our faith, the influence of the Holy Ghost, who brings all things to our remembrance (see John 14:26). Let me illustrate this point by quoting from a letter written many years ago by a new convert at that time and addressed to President Harold B. Lee after he spoke at a stake conference:

“As you spoke, an idea kept repeating itself in my mind: how life as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is like crossing a swinging bridge suspended between the points of birth by baptism into the Church and death into eternal life over the turbulent stream of worldliness and sin. As one starts out onto the bridge, the nearness of his baptism lends a feeling of security and faith, but as one becomes aware of the stream below and the vast expanse to be crossed, the sense of security gives way to spasmodic twinges of doubt and fear, causing one to lose the rhythm of prayer, faith, and love, and work which makes one’s progress smooth. The mists of doubt and apathy arise and corrode one’s heart and mind, impeding one’s progress and restricting one’s response to the magnetic force of love which streams across the bridge. It is then one breaks step and falls to his knees and hangs on until the force of love restores faith and direction to the crossing” (in *Conference Report*, Apr. 1965, 15; or *Improvement Era*, June 1965, 497).

Uniting families with a bridge of faith

Finally, a bridge of faith would not be complete without the linking of parents and children, uniting them to achieve an eternal family. The purpose of building this bridge of faith between generations is so they become one, as the Father and the Son are one—one in purpose in achieving

life eternal. In order to do so, commandments are given to us: first, for children to honor their father and their mother, then for parents to teach their children “to walk uprightly before the Lord” (D&C 68:28). Let me illustrate.

While I was a little boy during the Second World War, my country had been invaded; danger was all around us. My mother taught me a great lesson of trust and unity that I have never forgotten. She alerted me to the perils of war and simply said, “Trust my word and follow me; listen to my voice. If you do so, I will protect you the best I know how.” I simply listened to my mother because I loved her and trusted her.

A little later, school started, and this, for me, was a new bridge to cross. As a preparation for this new experience in my life, leaving the home, my mother told me to listen to my teacher and to be obedient. Again I trusted my mother’s advice. I decided to be obedient to my teacher and a new code of rules. School therefore became a bridge of knowledge instead of a wall of ignorance.

That lesson of trust and unity was vital to become one with my parents, family members, and teachers. It allowed me later to become one with my Savior by being baptized into His Church. It reminded me as a husband, father, and grandfather to continue to build trust and unity among our family members by keeping the temple covenants. As President Hinckley has said, “The temple is concerned with things of immortality. It is a bridge between this life and the next” (*Stand a Little Taller* [2001], 6).

Let us build bridges, not walls

In our day it is so easy to isolate ourselves by erecting temporal, spiritual, and even family or religious walls. Let us instead build more bridges of faith, of reconciliation, and live by the peace that is given “not as the world giveth” (John 14:27), but

by Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is the bridge of faith unto eternity.

I testify that Jesus is the Christ; I put my trust in Him and in His gospel of salvation to be reunited someday. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir and congregation sang
 “Now Let Us Rejoice.”

Sister Sheri L. Dew

“Not good that . . . man should be alone”

For nearly five years I have had the blessing of serving with Relief Society sisters and priesthood leaders from Africa to the Amazon. These experiences with you have reinforced for me the importance of a fundamental gospel principle. I wish to direct my remarks about this principle especially to the young adult men and women of the Church, who are embarking upon a most demanding phase of their lives.

This summer I injured a shoulder and lost the use of an arm for weeks. I hadn't realized how much one arm depends upon the other for balance, or how much less I could lift with one arm than two, or that there were some things I couldn't do at all. This disability not only renewed my respect for those who deal so well with a physical limitation, but helped me realize how much more two arms working together can do.

Two are usually better than one,¹ as our Father confirmed when He declared that “it was not good that the man should be alone”² and made a help meet for Adam—someone with distinct gifts who would give him balance, help him shoulder the burdens of mortality, and enable him to do things he couldn't do alone. For “neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.”³

Satan's efforts to devour marriages

Satan understands the power of men and women united in righteousness. He

is still stinging from his banishment into eternal exile after Michael led the hosts of heaven, comprised of valiant men and women united in the cause of Christ, against him. In the chilling words of Peter, “The devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”⁴ Lucifer is determined to devour marriages and families because their demise threatens the salvation of all involved and the vitality of the Lord's kingdom itself. Thus, Satan seeks to confuse us about our stewardships and distinctive natures as men and women. He bombards us with bizarre messages about gender, marriage, family, and all male-female relationships. He would have us believe men and women are so alike that our unique gifts are not necessary, or so different we can never hope to understand each other. Neither is true.

The Lord's pattern for couples

Our Father knew exactly what He was doing when He created us. He made us enough alike to love each other but enough different that we would need to unite our strengths and stewardships to create a whole. Neither man nor woman is perfect or complete without the other. Thus, no marriage or family, no ward or stake is likely to reach its full potential until husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, men and women work together in unity of purpose, respecting and relying upon each other's strengths.

These truths about the divinely appointed stewardships of men and women

are largely lost on the world today. You will not find them on a TV sitcom or even, sadly, in some homes and wards. But they are not lost to the Lord, who has given us "a pattern in all things, that [we] may not be deceived."⁵

The Lord's pattern for couples and in large measure men and women serving together in His kingdom was established by our first parents. Together Adam and Eve labored,⁶ mourned,⁷ were obedient, had children,⁸ taught their posterity the gospel,⁹ "called upon the name of the Lord, . . . heard the voice of the Lord,"¹⁰ "blessed the name of God,"¹¹ and dedicated themselves to God. Repeatedly the scriptures about Adam and Eve refer to the pronoun *they*.

Neither Adam with his priesthood nor Eve with her motherhood could bring about the Fall alone. Their unique roles were interconnected. They counseled with one another, lifted burdens neither could have lifted alone, and then faced the wilderness, with all its uncertainty, together. This is the Lord's pattern for righteous men and women.

Now, some of us encounter life circumstances that are less than ideal. I understand this. I personally deal with this. And yet, my dear young friends, in whose hands rests the future of the Church and its families, I must tell you that your understanding of this divine pattern will affect your marriage, your family, your ability to help build the kingdom, and your eternal life.

Priesthood magnifies, not diminishes, women

My young sisters, some will try to persuade you that because you are not ordained to the priesthood, you have been shortchanged. They are simply wrong, and they do not understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. The blessings of the priesthood are available to every righteous man and woman. We may all receive the Holy Ghost, obtain personal revelation, and be

endowed in the temple, from which we emerge "armed" with power.¹² The power of the priesthood heals, protects, and inoculates all of the righteous against the powers of darkness. Most significantly, the fulness of the priesthood contained in the highest ordinances of the house of the Lord can be received only by a man and woman together.¹³ Said President Harold B. Lee: "Pure womanhood plus priesthood means exaltation. But womanhood without priesthood, or priesthood without pure womanhood doesn't spell exaltation."¹⁴

Sisters, we as women are not diminished by priesthood power; we are magnified by it. I know this is true, for I have experienced it again and again.

Your future husbands and the men with whom you serve will need the support only you can give. You have an inner spiritual strength that President James E. Faust said equals and even surpasses that of men.¹⁵ Do not abdicate your spiritual responsibility. Your faith will preach compelling sermons. No amount of time in front of the mirror will make you as attractive as having the Holy Ghost with you. Bless your family and the Church as only a woman of God can—with virtue, faith, integrity, and constant compassion.

Counsel for young priesthood holders

Young men, your ordination to the priesthood is a grand privilege and responsibility—and not a license to dominate. Be unfailingly worthy to exercise this godly power, which is given you to be of service. A man is never more magnificent than when he is guided by the Spirit to honor the priesthood he holds.

If you will marry a virtuous woman who can hear the voice of the Lord, she will bless your life every day of your life. Consider Eve. She was the first to see that the fruit of the tree was good, and after partaking, she "gave unto her husband . . . , and he did eat."¹⁶ Were it not for Eve, our progression would have ceased.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks stated that her act was “a glorious necessity [that opened] the doorway toward eternal life. Adam showed his wisdom by doing the same.”¹⁷

Young men, you will preside at home and in the Church. But be humble enough to listen to and learn from the women in your life. They will provide insight, balance, and unique wisdom. And when challenges come, you will see how resilient a woman committed to God the Father and Jesus Christ is.

Divine pattern strengthens the Church

This divine pattern for men and women that strengthens marriages and families also fortifies the Church. For the Church cannot achieve the full measure of its creation unless both faithful men who bear the priesthood and righteous women who rejoice in serving under the direction of the priesthood work together. Time and again I have experienced this joy.

I think of a meeting in Brazil where I had a translator who was unsure of her ability to convert my English into Portuguese. But as it turned out, she and I communicated with ease. After the meeting I found out why. I learned that not only had the General Authority who presided been literally on the edge of his seat behind us the entire meeting, prompting the translator when necessary, but he had also assigned another priesthood leader to pray for both of us throughout the meeting.

That General Authority created a safety net of support so that I could fulfill the assignment he had given me. Such a circle of support has no end, because there is no end to the good works of righteous men and women who respect each other and who thrust in their sickles and reap, side by side, in the Lord's vineyard. If we are going to build the kingdom of God, we as men and women of God must build each other. There is no challenge—with activation, retention, families, or anything—that we can't solve when we counsel to-

gether in councils and help each other lift the load.

Unite in righteousness

My dear young friends, learn the Lord's pattern for men and women now. Ponder the scriptural accounts of Adam and Eve and see what the Lord will teach you that will strengthen your marriage, your family, and your Church service. Recent devastating events in the United States seem to indicate difficult days ahead. But they are days that will be filled with confidence and courage if the men and women of your generation unite in righteousness as never before. There is no limit to what you can accomplish if you will work together, equally yoked, under the guidance of the priesthood.

Our Father's patterns help us avoid deception. Look to the Lord and not to the world for your ideas and ideals about men and women. For, my young friends, you are the mothers, fathers, and leaders who were reserved for this unprecedented time because our Father knows you, and He knows you have what it takes to face the world and to be fearless in building the kingdom. Do it together, for it is not good for man or woman to be alone. Lift each other, and together you will be able to lift the beautiful burdens of mortality and have glory added upon your heads forever.¹⁸ The Lord must have righteous men and righteous women to build His kingdom. I know that this is so. God is our Father. His Only Begotten Son is the Christ. This is Their work and Their glory. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Ecclesiastes 4:9.
2. Moses 3:18; see also Abraham 5:14.
3. 1 Corinthians 11:11.
4. 1 Peter 5:8.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 52:14.
6. See Moses 5:1.
7. See Moses 5:27.
8. See 2 Nephi 2:20.
9. See Moses 5:12.

10. Moses 5:4.
11. Moses 5:12.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:22.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4; 132:19–20.
14. *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee* (1996), 292.
15. See “What It Means to Be a Daughter of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 101.
16. Moses 4:12.
17. In Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 98; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 73.
18. See Abraham 3:26.

Elder Henry B. Eyring

A turning to fervent, heartfelt prayer

The world seems to be in commotion. There are wars and rumors of wars. The economies of whole continents are faltering. Crops are failing from lack of rain in places all over the earth. And the people in peril have flooded heaven with prayers. In public and in private, they are petitioning God for help, for comfort, and for direction.

You have probably noticed, as I have in recent days, that prayers have not only become more numerous but more heartfelt. I often am seated on the stand in a meeting near the person who has been asked to pray. I have listened recently with wonder. The words spoken are clearly inspired by God, both eloquent and wise. And the tone is that of a loving child seeking help, not as we might from an earthly parent but from an all-powerful Heavenly Father who knows our needs before we ask.

Such a turning to fervent prayer when the world seems out of joint is as old as mankind. In times of tragedy and danger, people turn to God in prayer. Even the ancient King David would recognize what is happening. You remember his words from the book of Psalms:

“The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

“And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.”¹

“I hope that the change lasts”

The great increase in heartfelt prayer, and the public acceptance of it, has been remarkable to me and to others. More than once in recent days, someone has said to me with great intensity and with a sound of worry in the voice, “I hope that the change lasts.”

That worry is justified. Our own personal experience and God’s record of His dealing with His children teaches us that. Dependence upon God can fade quickly when prayers are answered. And when the trouble lessens, so do the prayers. The Book of Mormon repeats that sad story over and over again.

The awful pattern of forgetting God

From the book of Helaman, “O, how could you have forgotten your God in the very day that he has delivered you?”² And later from the same book, after God had answered prayers with gracious kindness, the awful pattern is described again:

“And thus we can behold how false, and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men; yea, we can see that the Lord in his great infinite goodness doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him.

“Yea, and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people, yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver,

and in all manner of precious things of every kind and art; sparing their lives, and delivering them out of the hands of their enemies; softening the hearts of their enemies that they should not declare wars against them; yea, and in fine, doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One—yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceedingly great prosperity.

“And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit them with death and with terror, and with famine and with all manner of pestilence, they will not remember him.”³

The reasons why some forget God

And now, from the next words of that same scripture, we learn why it is we forget so easily the source of our blessings and cease to feel our need to pray with faith:

“O how foolish, and how vain, and how evil, and devilish, and how quick to do iniquity, and how slow to do good, are the children of men; yea, how quick to hearken unto the words of the evil one, and to set their hearts upon the vain things of the world!

“Yea, how quick to be lifted up in pride; yea, how quick to boast, and do all manner of that which is iniquity; and how slow are they to remember the Lord their God, and to give ear unto his counsels, yea, how slow to walk in wisdom’s paths!

“Behold, they do not desire that the Lord their God, who hath created them, should rule and reign over them; notwithstanding his great goodness and his mercy towards them, they do set at naught his counsels, and they will not that he should be their guide.”⁴

From those three short verses of scripture, we see three causes for the sad drift away from humble prayer. First, while God

implores us to pray, the enemy of our souls belittles and then derides it. The warning from 2 Nephi is true:

“And now, my beloved brethren, I perceive that ye ponder still in your hearts; and it grieveth me that I must speak concerning this thing. For if ye would hearken unto the Spirit which teacheth a man to pray ye would know that ye must pray; for the evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth him that he must not pray.”⁵

Second, God is forgotten out of vanity. A little prosperity and peace, or even a turn slightly for the better, can bring us feelings of self-sufficiency. We can feel quickly that we are in control of our lives, that the change for the better is our own doing, not that of a God who communicates to us through the still, small voice of the Spirit. Pride creates a noise within us which makes the quiet voice of the Spirit hard to hear. And soon, in our vanity, we no longer even listen for it. We can come quickly to think we don’t need it.

The third cause is rooted deeply within us. We are spirit children of a loving Heavenly Father, who placed us in mortality to see if we would choose—freely choose—to keep His commandments and come unto His Beloved Son. They do not compel us. They cannot, for that would interfere with the plan of happiness. And so there is in us a God-given desire to be responsible for our own choices.

Be submissive, putting off the natural man

That desire to make our own choices is part of the upward pull toward eternal life. But it can, if we see life only through our mortal eyes, make dependence on God difficult or even impossible when we feel such a powerful desire to be independent. This true doctrine can sound hard:

“For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of

Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.”⁶

Those who submit like a child do it because they know that the Father wants only the happiness of His children and that only He knows the way. That is the testimony we must have to keep praying like a submissive child, in the good times as well as the times of trouble.

What it means to be diligent in prayer

With that faith we will be able to pray for what we want and appreciate whatever we get. Only with that faith will we pray with the diligence God requires. When God has commanded us to pray, He has used words like “pray unceasingly” and “pray always” and “mighty prayer.”

Those commands do not require using many words. In fact, the Savior has told us that we need not multiply words when we pray. The diligence in prayer which God requires does not take flowery speech nor long hours of solitude. That is taught clearly in Alma in the Book of Mormon:

“Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you.”⁷

Joseph's example of diligence in prayer

Our hearts can be drawn out to God only when they are filled with love for Him and trust in His goodness. Joseph Smith, even as a boy, gave us an example of how we can come to pray from a heart filled with the love of God and then pray unceasingly through a life filled with trials and blessings.

Joseph started for the grove to pray with faith that a loving God would answer his prayer and relieve his confusion. He gained that assurance reading the word of

God and receiving a witness that it was true. He said that he read in James, “Let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”⁸ His faith to ask of God in prayer came after pondering a scripture which assured him of God's loving nature. He prayed, as we must, with faith in a loving God.

He prayed with the intent not only to listen but to obey. He did not ask only to know the truth. He was committed to act upon whatever God would communicate to him. His written account makes clear that he prayed with real intent, determined to comply with whatever answer he received. He wrote:

“Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did; for how to act I did not know, and unless I could get more wisdom than I then had, I would never know; for the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible.”⁹

The Father and His Beloved Son appeared to him in answer to his prayer. And he was told how to act, as he had desired. He obeyed like a child. He was told to join none of the churches. He did as he was told. And because of his faithfulness, in the days and months and years ahead his prayers were answered with a flood of light and truth. The fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the keys of the kingdom of God were restored to the earth. His humble dependence on God led to the Restoration of the gospel, with authority and sacred ordinances. Because of that Restoration, we have the chance to choose the most priceless independence to be free of the bondage of sin through

the cleansing power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Joseph Smith's mission was unique, yet his humble prayer can be a helpful model for us. He began, as we must, with faith in a loving God who can and wants to communicate with us and help us. That faith was rooted in impressions which came to him as he pondered the words of God's servants in the scriptures.

We can and must go often and carefully to the word of God. If we become casual in our study of the scriptures, we will become casual in our prayers. We may not cease to pray, but our prayers will become more repetitive, more mechanical, lacking real intent. Our hearts cannot be drawn out to a God we do not know, and the scriptures and the words of living prophets help us know Him. As we know Him better, we love Him more.

We must also serve Him to love Him. Joseph Smith did that, finally surrendering life itself in His service. Joseph prayed with the intent to obey. That obedience always includes service to others. Service in God's work allows us to feel a part of what He feels and come to know Him.

"For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?"¹⁰ As our love for Him increases, so will our desire to approach the Father in prayer.

Ensuring we do not drift from prayer

The words and the music of this conference will lead you to do what will strengthen you against the danger of a drift away from heartfelt prayer. From what you hear you will feel promptings to go to the scriptures. Follow the promptings. You will be reminded in this conference of service you committed to give when you entered the waters of baptism. Choose to obey.

If you ponder the scriptures and begin to do what you covenanted with God to do, I can promise you that you will feel more love for God and more of His love for you. And with that, your prayers will come from the heart, full of thanks and of pleading. You will feel a greater dependence on God. You will find the courage and the determination to act in His service, without fear and with peace in your heart. You will pray always. And you will not forget Him, no matter what the future brings.

I bear you my testimony that God the Father lives. He loves us. He hears our prayers, and He answers with what is best for us. As we come to know Him through His words and in His service, we will love Him more. I know that is true.

The fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the true Church of Jesus Christ have been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. The keys of the priesthood are only in this Church. I know as surely as I live that President Gordon B. Hinckley holds and exercises the keys on the earth. Jesus Christ lives—I know that—and He leads His Church today. He will teach you through His servants in this conference.

In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Psalm 9:9–10.
2. Helaman 7:20.
3. Helaman 12:1–3.
4. Helaman 12:4–6.
5. 2 Nephi 32:8.
6. Mosiah 3:19.
7. Alma 34:27.
8. James 1:5; see Joseph Smith—History 1:11.
9. Joseph Smith—History 1:12.
10. Mosiah 5:13.

The choir sang "I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly."

President Monson

The choir has sung "I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly."

As you leave this morning, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in your driving.

We express our appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided during this session.

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." The benediction will be offered by Bishop Richard C. Edgley of the Presiding Bishopric. The conference will then be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

President James E. Faust

The incomparable Atonement

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, I come humbly to this pulpit this morning because I wish to speak about the greatest event in all history. That singular event was the incomparable Atonement of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. This was the most transcendent act that has ever taken place, yet it is the most difficult to understand.

My reason for wanting to learn all I can about the Atonement is partly selfish: Our salvation depends on believing in and accepting the Atonement.¹ Such acceptance requires a continual effort to understand it more fully. The Atonement advances our mortal course of learning by making it possible for our natures to become perfect.² All of us have sinned and need to repent to fully pay *our* part of the debt. When we sincerely repent, the Savior's magnificent Atonement pays the *rest* of that debt.³

Paul gave a simple explanation for the need of the Atonement: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."⁴ Jesus Christ was appointed and foreordained to be our Redeemer before the world was formed. With His divine sonship, His sinless life, the shedding of His blood in the Garden of Gethsemane, His excruciating death on the cross and subsequent bodily Resurrection from the grave, He became the author of our

salvation and made a perfect Atonement for all mankind.⁵

Understanding what we can of the Atonement and the Resurrection of Christ helps us obtain a knowledge of Him and of His mission.⁶ Any increase in our understanding of His atoning sacrifice draws us closer to Him. Literally, the Atonement means to be "at one" with Him. The nature of the Atonement and its effects is so infinite, so unfathomable, and so profound that it lies beyond the knowledge and comprehension of mortal man.

I am profoundly grateful for the principle of saving grace. Many people think they need only confess that Jesus is the Christ and then they are saved by grace alone. We cannot be saved by grace alone, "for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, *after* all we can do."⁷

A parable to help us understand the Atonement

Some years ago, President Gordon B. Hinckley told "something of a parable" about "a one room school house in the mountains of Virginia where the boys were so rough no teacher had been able to handle them.

"Then one day an inexperienced young teacher applied. He was told that every teacher had received an awful beating, but the teacher accepted the risk. The first day of school the teacher asked the

boys to establish their own rules and the penalty for breaking the rules. The class came up with 10 rules, which were written on the blackboard. Then the teacher asked, 'What shall we do with one who breaks the rules?'

"'Beat him across the back ten times without his coat on,' came the response.

"A day or so later, . . . the lunch of a big student, named Tom, was stolen. 'The thief was located—a little hungry fellow, about ten years old.'

"As Little Jim came up to take his licking, he pleaded to keep his coat on. 'Take your coat off,' the teacher said. 'You helped make the rules!'

"The boy took off the coat. He had no shirt and revealed a bony little crippled body. As the teacher hesitated with the rod, Big Tom jumped to his feet and volunteered to take the boy's licking.

"Very well, there is a certain law that one can become a substitute for another. Are you all agreed?' the teacher asked.

"After five strokes across Tom's back, the rod broke. The class was sobbing. 'Little Jim had reached up and caught Tom with both arms around his neck. "Tom, I'm sorry that I stole your lunch, but I was awful hungry. Tom, I will love you till I die for taking my licking for me! Yes, I will love you forever!"' "8

President Hinckley then quoted Isaiah:

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . .

" . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."9

The Savior's suffering for us

No man knows the full weight of what our Savior bore, but by the power of the Holy Ghost we can know something of the supernal gift He gave us.¹⁰ In the words of our sacrament hymn:

We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains he had to bear,
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.¹¹

He suffered so much pain, "indescribable anguish," and "overpowering torture"¹² for our sake. His profound suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane, where He took upon Himself all the sins of all other mortals, caused Him "to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit."¹³ "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly,"¹⁴ saying, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."¹⁵ He was betrayed by Judas Iscariot and denied by Peter. He was mocked by the chief priests and officers; He was stripped, smitten, spat upon, and scourged in the judgment hall.¹⁶

He was led to Golgotha, where nails were driven into His hands and feet. He hung in agony for hours on a wooden cross bearing the title written by Pilate: "JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS."¹⁷ Darkness came, and "about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"¹⁸ No one could help Him; He was treading the winepress alone.¹⁹

Then "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost."²⁰ "One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water."²¹ "The earth did quake," and "when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God."²² In the words of the hymn, "Let me not forget, O Savior, / Thou didst bleed and die for me."²³ I wonder how many drops were shed for me.

What He did could be done only by Deity. As the Only Begotten Son of the

Father in the flesh, Jesus inherited divine attributes. He was the only person ever born into mortality who could perform this most significant and supernal act. As the only sinless Man who ever lived on this earth, He was not subject to spiritual death. Because of His godhood, He also possessed power over physical death. Thus He did for us what we cannot do for ourselves. He broke the cold grasp of death. He also made it possible for us to have the supreme and serene comfort of the gift of the Holy Ghost.²⁴

Blessings of Atonement and Resurrection

The Atonement and the Resurrection accomplish many things. The Atonement cleanses us of sin on condition of our repentance. Repentance is the condition on which mercy is extended.²⁵ After all we can do to pay to the uttermost farthing and make right our wrongs, the Savior's grace is activated in our lives through the Atonement, which purifies us and can perfect us.²⁶ Christ's Resurrection overcame death and gave us the assurance of life after death. Said He, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."²⁷ The Resurrection is unconditional and applies to all who have ever lived and ever will live.²⁸ It is a free gift. President John Taylor described this well when he said:

"The tombs will be opened and the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and they shall come forth, they who have done good to the resurrection of the just, and they who have done evil to the resurrection of the unjust."²⁹

With reference to our mortal acts and the Atonement, President J. Reuben Clark Jr. contributed this valuable insight when he said:

"I feel that [the Savior] will give that punishment which is the very least that our transgression will justify. I believe that he will bring into his justice all of the infinite love and blessing and mercy and

kindness and understanding which he has. . . .

"And on the other hand, I believe that when it comes to making the rewards for our good conduct, he will give us the maximum that it is possible to give, having in mind the offense which we have committed."³⁰

As Isaiah wrote, if we will return unto the Lord, "he will abundantly pardon."³¹

We are commanded to remember the singular events of the mediation, Crucifixion, and Atonement by partaking of the sacrament weekly. In the spirit of the sacrament prayers, we partake of the bread and water in remembrance of the body and the blood sacrificed for us, and we are to remember Him and keep His commandments so that we may always have His Spirit to be with us.

Our Redeemer took upon Himself all the sins, pains, infirmities, and sicknesses of all who have ever lived and will ever live.³² No one has ever suffered in any degree what He did. He knows our mortal trials by firsthand experience. It is a bit like us trying to climb Mount Everest and only getting up the first few feet. But He has climbed all 29,000 feet to the top of the mountain. He suffered more than any other mortal could.

Atonement is source of healing for victims

The Atonement not only benefits the sinner but also benefits those sinned against—that is, the victims. By our forgiving "those who trespass against us" (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:13), the Atonement brings a measure of peace and comfort to those of us who have been innocently victimized by the sins of others. The basic source for the healing of the soul is the Atonement of Jesus Christ. This is true whether it be from the pain of a personal tragedy or a terrible national calamity such as we have recently experienced in New York and Washington, D.C., and near Pittsburgh.

A sister who had been through a painful divorce wrote of her experience in drawing from the Atonement. She said: "Our divorce . . . did not release me from the obligation to forgive. I truly wanted to do it, but it was as if I had been commanded to do something of which I was simply incapable." Her bishop gave her some sound advice: "Keep a place in your heart for forgiveness, and when it comes, welcome it in." Many months passed as this struggle to forgive continued. She recalled:

"During those long, prayerful moments . . . I tapped into a life-giving source of comfort from my loving Heavenly Father. I sense that he was not standing by glaring at me for not having accomplished forgiveness yet; rather he was sorrowing with me as I wept. . . .

"In the final analysis, what happened in my heart is for me an amazing and miraculous evidence of the Atonement of Christ. I had always viewed the Atonement as a means of making repentance work for the sinner. I had not realized that it also makes it possible for the one sinned against to receive into his or her heart the sweet peace of forgiving."³³

The injured should do what they can to work through their trials, and the Savior will "succor his people according to their infirmities."³⁴ He will help us carry our burdens. Some injuries are so hurtful and deep that they cannot be healed without help from a higher power and hope for perfect justice and restitution in the next life. Since the Savior has suffered anything and everything that we could ever feel or experience,³⁵ He can help the weak to become stronger. He has personally experienced all of it. He understands our pain and will walk with us even in our darkest hours.

Becoming one with Him

We long for the ultimate blessing of the Atonement—to become one with Him, to be in His divine presence, to be

called individually by name as He warmly welcomes us home with a radiant smile, beckoning us with open arms to be enfolded in His boundless love.³⁶ How gloriously sublime this experience will be if we can feel worthy enough to be in His presence! The free gift of His great atoning sacrifice for each of us is the only way we can be exalted enough to stand before Him and see Him face-to-face. The overwhelming message of the Atonement is the perfect love the Savior has for each and all of us. It is a love which is full of mercy, patience, grace, equity, long-suffering, and, above all, forgiving.

The evil influence of Satan would destroy any hope we have in overcoming our mistakes. He would have us feel that we are lost and that there is no hope. In contrast, Jesus reaches down to us to lift us up. Through our repentance and the gift of the Atonement, we can prepare to be worthy to stand in His presence. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Mosiah 4:6–7.
2. See Moroni 10:32.
3. See 2 Nephi 25:23.
4. 1 Corinthians 15:22.
5. See Bible Dictionary, "Atonement," 617.
6. See Jacob 4:12.
7. 2 Nephi 25:23; italics added.
8. "Pres. Hinckley: Christmas a Result of Redeeming Christ," *Church News*, 10 Dec. 1994, 4.
9. Isaiah 53:4–5.
10. See 1 Corinthians 12:3.
11. "There Is a Green Hill Far Away," *Hymns*, no. 194.
12. John Taylor, *The Mediation and Atonement* (1882), 150.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.
14. Luke 22:44.
15. Matthew 26:42.
16. See Matthew 26:47–75; 27:28–31; John 18:28, 33; 19:1–3.
17. John 19:19.
18. Matthew 27:46.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 133:50.

20. Matthew 27:50.
21. John 19:34.
22. Matthew 27:51, 54.
23. "In Humility, Our Savior," *Hymns*, no. 172.
24. See John 15:26.
25. See Alma 42:22–25.
26. See 2 Nephi 25:23; Alma 34:15–16; 42:22–24; Moroni 10:32–33.
27. John 11:25.
28. See Acts 24:15.
29. *The Gospel Kingdom*, sel. G. Homer Durham (1943), 118; see also John 5:28–29.
30. "As Ye Sow . . .," Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (3 May 1955), 7.

31. Isaiah 55:7.
32. See Alma 7:11–12.
33. Name Withheld, "My Journey to Forgiving," *Ensign*, Feb. 1997, 42–43.
34. Alma 7:12.
35. See Alma 7:11.
36. See Alma 26:15; Mormon 5:11; 6:17; Moses 7:63.

The choir sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Bishop Richard C. Edgley offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, October 6, 2001, at 2:00 P.M. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by a combined choir from Utah County. Steven Kapp Perry directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the second general session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a combined choir from Utah County, under the direction of Steven Kapp Perry, with Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "Home Can Be a Heaven on Earth." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Jay E. Jensen of the Seventy. After the invocation, the choir will sing "I Am a Child of God."

The choir sang "Home Can Be a Heaven on Earth."

Elder Jay E. Jensen offered the invocation.

The choir sang "I Am a Child of God."

President Monson

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will now present the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for sustaining vote.

Following President Faust, Elders David B. Haight and Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

will address us. We will then be pleased to hear from Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Seventy.

The Sustaining of Church Officers

President James E. Faust

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor may manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release Elders L. Aldin Porter and Marlin K. Jensen as members of the Presidency of the Seventy. It is also proposed that we release Elders L. Aldin Porter, Vaughn J. Feath-

erstone, Rex D. Pinegar, John K. Carmack, and L. Lionel Kendrick as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy and designate them as emeritus members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. All who wish to join with us in doing so, please manifest it.

With gratitude for their service as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy, we extend an honorable release to Elders Richard B. Wirthlin, Richard E. Cook, Wayne M. Hancock, and Ray H. Wood and to the following as Area Authority Seventies: Norman C. Boehm, Jess L. Christensen, Dale L. Dransfield, David W. Eka, James E. Griffin, Esteban Guevara, Ronald J. Hammond, Thomas A. Holt, Ernst Husz, Julio H. Jaramillo, Lloyd W. Jones, Seiji Katanuma, J. Grey Larkin, Haruyoshi Nakamura, Karl E. Nelson, Jesús Nieves, Rodrigo Obeso, James S. Olson, Glen A. Overton, William W. Parmley, Steven H. Pond, Michael T. Robinson, Jorge W. Ventura, and Craig T. Vincent. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation, please indicate by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks Elders Marlin K. Jensen, Neil L. Andersen, and John H. Groberg as the Sunday School general presidency; and Elders Robert K. Dellenbach, F. Melvin Hammond, and John M. Madsen as the Young Men general presidency. All in favor, please signify by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Charles Didier and Cecil O. Samuelson as members of the Presidency of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Carlos J. Garcia, R. Randall Huff, and John W. Yardley as Area Authority Seventies. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Cecil O. Samuelson, John H. Groberg, and Richard J. Maynes as the Sunday School general presidency and Elders F. Melvin Hammond, Glenn L. Pace, and Spencer J. Condie as the Young Men general presidency. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative.

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and prayers.

Elder David B. Haight

I hope that you had a little burning in your heart as I did when I raised my hand in sustaining President Hinckley as President of the Church and as prophet, seer, and revelator, and the other officers that have been presented to you. What a wonderful and grand opportunity that is for all of us to be able to sustain our living prophet upon the earth today—but not just to sit there and raise your hand in a haphazard way, but to feel it in your heart and soul that you not only sustain him but you endorse what he has been doing and what he has done for us in representing us to the world. We are thankful for the marvelous and inspired way in which he has communicated and spoken to the world, particularly in these last few days and weeks.

Conference helps us keep our lives in tune

A few years ago, when Arturo Toscanini was musical director of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra in New York City, he had a Saturday afternoon radio broadcast. And one day he received in his mail a crumpled little note on some brownish paper which read:

"Dear Mr. Toscanini, I am a lonely shepherd in the mountains of Wyoming. I have two prized possessions: an old violin and a battery radio. And the

batteries are getting weak and beginning to run down on my radio, and my violin is so out of tune I can't play it anymore. Would you please sound an A next Saturday on your program?"

The next week on the program, Arturo Toscanini announced: "To a new-found friend in the mountains of Wyoming, the New York Philharmonic Orchestra is now, all together and in unison, going to sound a perfect A." And they sounded the perfect A. Then that lonely little man was able to tune the A string and then the E string and the D and the G from that perfect A.

Isn't it interesting to reflect in our own lives and in the lives of the many people who may hear me at this time—those whose violin or lives may be a little out of tune—that we are able to come to a general conference of the Church and hear the marvelous messages that are spoken? Those of us who have the opportunity to speak here pray mightily that we would have the energy and the strength and the vitality even as I do, as I enter the twilight of my life, to stand and bear witness of the truthfulness of this work—because I am a witness of it.

I have had the opportunity—as many of you have and as many of you would wish to have—of being raised in a Mormon home and to be a product of the

Church, and to have had the opportunity to go out and live in the world and rub shoulders with people in many places, whether it would be in government or the corporate world or whatever, but to associate with people and to be able to share with them the feelings that you have in your heart.

President Hinckley's inspired leadership

Often President Hinckley has said to us in some of our meetings, and I think he has said it publicly, that behind his desk he has a picture of Brigham Young. Sometimes when President Hinckley has had a busy day and a hard day of making many, many difficult decisions, he turns in his chair and looks up at Brigham's picture behind him and either asks out loud or in his own mind says, "Brother Brigham, what would you have done?" or "What advice would you give to me?"

Think of what has happened in the last few years. You all know so well all of the inspiration and the direction that have come to President Hinckley in the expansion of the Church—the building of temples and the remodeling of the old Hotel Utah into that marvelous building, now the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, and for this unusual structure, the Conference Center, that we're in today—probably nothing like it in the world. And for us who have for now a number of years worked with and by the side of and have listened to and been associated with President Hinckley, what a marvelous experience we've had and blessing in our lives as we have seen and felt and been part of the inspired expansion that has been moving forward.

Brigham Young's inspired leadership

As we look at Brigham Young and reflect upon the inspiration and direction that came to that most unusual man, we recall how he was able to fill the tragic void caused by the death of the Prophet

Joseph Smith, how he stepped in and was able under inspiration and revelation to guide and direct the closing of Nauvoo and the planning of the trip west. We remember the continued work there at that time on the Nauvoo Temple and the way that was organized to move forward, with the wagon trains crossing the West and into the Salt Lake Valley into what would become the Zion where they could worship and teach and preach and build the meetinghouses and all that would be needed for this civilization and for this culture that we have, to expand and grow here.

Think of the inspiration that came to the prophet Brigham Young for those people not to just build up a big city in Salt Lake, but to move out into these other settlements. He had the genius to have people go out and look for the valleys and the areas away from Salt Lake City where the pioneers who would pour into this valley could go and settle and make their homes and build cities and communities and build their personalities and their characters and develop the talents that would be theirs. So rather than having a large city in Salt Lake, under his leadership some 360 communities were developed out in Wyoming and Nevada and Arizona and southern Idaho as well as in Utah.

As people moved out and set up in these little communities, they developed their talents and abilities by serving on school boards and on town councils or became leading people in a little town. They became citizens of that area, and they started building schools and expanding those communities. We see what has happened in these areas that Brigham Young envisioned and which he helped set in motion. Just think of how that has developed—of the developing of a settlement, for example, in Las Vegas, Nevada, so that people could go down to San Bernardino, California. The people could come by ship into San Pedro, California,

go to San Bernardino to be outfitted and helped with the equipment necessary to come into this valley, and then into the outlying communities, down into Sanpete County or up into Idaho or elsewhere.

Faithful pioneer ancestors

I have become a product of that, because when my mother's family arrived here in Salt Lake City, they were sent out to Tooele to settle. Then later they were sent up into Idaho, where a sawmill and a gristmill needed to be built. My father's family had settled in Farmington, Utah, part of this colonization that I'm referring to—the colonization that made people stronger and gave them opportunities. Rather than being lost in a big city, they were asked to move to a smaller community where they could develop their ability and where there would be more schools and a need for more schoolteachers and where people with talent would develop their ability. Out of all of this, my family were asked to leave Farmington and Tooele, to sell their green acres, and go out into southern Idaho, where there was nothing at that time but sagebrush.

In a little settlement of that kind, my mother and father fell in love. By the time they were 20 years old and ready to be married, where would they be married? In the Logan Utah Temple. How would they get there? By buggy. How long would it take? Well, five or six or seven days. Highways and good roads? Of course not. They went by roads made by wagons going over the sagebrush and through the bushes and over the rocks. Where would they be married? Where would they be sealed? Only one place—the temple. They went by buggy.

That became part of my heritage. And so people grew up in these little towns. Then the Church decided to open some academies, and they opened some 30 of them out in these areas far away. One of those little academies was opened in our

town, and it became an area where many from neighboring areas would move into that little town to get a higher education. Of course, the higher education was only a high school, but it was referred to as an academy.

Blessings of prophetic leadership

I'm referring to the inspiration that came to the prophet Brigham Young years ago in the settlement, in the development of this intermountain area now surrounding Salt Lake City. And think of who we are today and how this has grown and the blessing that has come into our lives to have President Hinckley as our prophet, seer, and revelator and leader and to envision what is happening and what will be happening ahead of us if we just have the faith to be able to continue to do what has been started. Think of what is on the way and being done.

Our need to develop greater faith

President Hinckley often speaks to us about developing more faith with our people. That faith is a result of our living the principles of the gospel, living the way we should and raising our children as we should, and seeing them grow and develop their character and personality in a way that they become an example of what we believe in and what we have a hope to do and accomplish.

You'll all remember the man who had a son who was a lunatic. And he approached the Savior and asked if the Savior would bless the boy to drive that evil spirit from his son. And the man told the Savior, "I've asked your disciples to do this, but they haven't been able to do it." The Savior blessed that little boy. The evil spirit immediately departed, and the Savior's disciples came to him and said, "Why couldn't we do it? Why weren't we able to?" (See Matthew 17:14–21.) The Savior also had said, "O ye of little faith" (Matthew 16:8).

If ye had but the faith of a tiny—I'm trying to think of the name of that little tree. [President Hinckley says, "Mustard."] Mustard! Thank you, President. (I keep the President around to help me.) If you had but the faith of a mustard seed. Perhaps not many of you have seen a mustard seed. A few years ago in Jerusalem we were in a car with a driver, and he said, "Oh, there's a mustard tree." And I said, "Let's see it." We got out to look at that mustard tree, and it had a little pod on it, and I was able to open the pod, which was like those on a locust tree, and see those tiny little seeds, not much larger than a grain of pepper.

Just imagine the analogy that the Savior was teaching the people. If you only had as much faith as that little tiny mustard seed—and I held it in my hand, and I could hardly see it—if you had that much faith you would say to the mountain, "Move hence," and it would move, if you

had that much faith (see Matthew 17:20). "O ye of little faith," he told us.

So what we need is the faith of Brigham Young and the faith of Gordon B. Hinckley and the faith of people who are our prophets and leaders.

God lives. I know He's real, that He is our Father, and I know that He loves us. I know that. And I know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. I have felt of that influence. I'm a witness to it. I know that the Prophet Joseph Smith and all of the historical accounts we have of what he did as the instrument of the Restoration are true and that the prophets down through the years and including President Hinckley are called of God. The work is true. I leave you my love, my witness, and my testimony that burns in my heart. All the days of my life I hope to be able to tell somebody and help somebody understand that this work is true, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

My beloved brethren and sisters, it is a great privilege for me to stand here today and bear my testimony as to the truth of the gospel that has been restored. We have just listened to Elder David B. Haight—95 years of age. I just hope my memory is half as good as his at that age—if I live that long.

I rejoice when the Saints assemble. Whether we gather as families in humble homes or by the thousands in huge halls, the heavens rejoice when those who love and honor the name of Jesus Christ gather together to worship in His name.

We all are going through different life experiences. While some are filled with joy today, others feel as though their hearts could burst with sorrow. Some feel as though the world is their oyster; others feel as though they were the oyster itself, plucked from the ocean, cracked open, and robbed of all that is precious to them.

No matter your station, no matter your emotional or spiritual state of mind, I would like to offer counsel to you that may be of use, regardless of where you are in your sojourn through this mortal life.

Certainly we have much to be grateful for. And I think if we will consider the blessings we have, we will forget some of our worries. Certainly serenity and joy will come to you if you realize the blessings we have as a Church under the leadership of our wonderful President, President Gordon B. Hinckley. It will help us a great deal.

A blind man's ascent of Mount Everest

Recently I read about Erik Weiheymayer, a 33-year-old man who dreamed of climbing Mount Everest, a feat that defies many of the world's most expert climbers. In fact, nearly 90 percent of those who at-

tempt the climb never reach the summit. Temperatures sink lower than 30 degrees below zero. Besides extreme cold, 100-mile-per-hour winds, deadly crevasses, and avalanches, the climber must overcome the challenges of high altitude, lack of oxygen, and perhaps unsanitary food and water. Since 1953, at least 165 climbers have died in the attempt to scale the 29,000-foot-high summit.

In spite of the risks, hundreds line up each year to make the ascent, Erik among them. But there is an important difference between Erik and every other climber who had attempted to ascend before: Erik is totally blind.

When Erik was 13 years of age, he lost his sight as a result of a hereditary disease of the retina. Although he could no longer do many of the things he wanted to, he was determined not to waste his life feeling depressed and useless. He then began to stretch his limits.

At age 16 he discovered rock climbing. By feeling the face of the rock, he found handholds and footholds that allowed him to climb. Sixteen years later, he began his ascent up Mount Everest. The story of his climb, as you might imagine, was filled with many harrowing and life-threatening challenges. But Erik eventually scaled the south summit and took his place with those who had gone before him, one of the few to stand on top of the highest mountain on the face of the earth.

When asked how he did it, Erik said, "I just kept thinking . . . keep your mind focused. Don't let all that doubt and fear and frustration sort of get in the way." Then, most important, he said, "Just take each day step by step."¹

Yes, Erik conquered Everest by simply putting one foot in front of the other. And he continued to do this until he reached the top.

Overcoming our obstacles step by step

Like Erik, we may have obstacles that would hold us back. We may even make

excuses why we can't do what we want to do. Perhaps when we are tempted to justify our own lack of achievement, we can remember Erik, who, in spite of having lost his sight, accomplished what many thought was impossible simply by continuing to put one foot in front of the other.

An old proverb states that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

Sometimes we make the process more complicated than we need to. We will never make a journey of a thousand miles by fretting about how long it will take or how hard it will be. We make the journey by taking each day step by step and then repeating it again and again until we reach our destination.

Climbing higher spiritually step by step

The same principle applies to how you and I can climb to higher spirituality.

Our Heavenly Father knows that we must begin our climb from where we are. "When you climb up a ladder," the Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them."²

Steadiness, not speed, is most important

Our Heavenly Father loves each one of us and understands that this process of climbing higher takes preparation, time, and commitment. He understands that we will make mistakes at times, that we will stumble, that we will become discouraged and perhaps even wish to give up and say to ourselves it is not worth the struggle.

We know it is worth the effort, for the prize, which is eternal life, is "the greatest of all the gifts of God."³ And to qualify, we must take one step after another and

keep going to gain the spiritual heights we aspire to reach.

An eternal principle is revealed in holy writ: "It is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength. And again, it is expedient that he should be diligent, that thereby he might win the prize."⁴

We don't have to be fast; we simply have to be steady and move in the right direction. We have to do the best we can, one step after another.

In my younger days I loved to run. Although it may be hard for you to believe it, I did. And I did win a few races. I'm not so fast anymore. In fact, I'm not sure how well I would do in a race if the only contestants were the members of the Quorum of the Twelve.

My ability to run is not so swift now. While I am looking forward to that future time when, with a resurrected body, I can once again sprint over a field and feel the wind blowing through my hair, I do not dwell on the fact that I cannot do it now. That would be unwise. Instead, I take the steps that I can take. Even with the limitations of age, I can still take one step at a time. To do what I can is all my Heavenly Father now requires of me. And it is all He requires of you, regardless of your disabilities, limitations, or insecurities.

Strive to be your best, not better than others

John Wooden was perhaps the greatest college basketball coach in the history of the game. He had four full undefeated seasons. His teams won 10 national championships. At one point he had a streak of 88 consecutive wins.⁵

One of the first things Coach Wooden drilled into his players was something his father had taught him when he was a boy growing up on a farm. "Don't worry much about trying to be better than someone else," his father said. "Learn from others, yes. But don't just try to be better than they are. You have no control over that.

Instead try, and try very hard, to be the best that you can be. That you have control over."⁶

Let me cite a hypothetical example of a dear sister in any ward, the one who has perfect children who never cause a disturbance in church. She is the one working on her 20th generation in her family history, keeps an immaculate home, has memorized the book of Mark, and makes wool sweaters for the orphaned children in Romania. No disrespect, of course, intended for any of these worthy goals. Now, when you get tempted to throw your hands in the air and give up because of this dear sister, please remember you're not competing with her any more than I'm competing with the members of the Quorum of the Twelve in winning a 50-yard dash.

The only thing you need to worry about is striving to be the best you can be. And how do you do that? You keep your eye on the goals that matter most in life, and you move toward them step by step.

Guides to help us along the path

I know many feel that the path is hard and the way is dark. But like Erik, the courageous mountain climber, we are not left without a guide.

We have scriptures that reveal the word of God to mankind through the ages. When we feast upon the word of God, we open our minds to eternal truths and our hearts to the gentle whisperings of the Holy Ghost. Truly God's word, through scriptures and modern-day prophets, is a "lamp unto [our] feet, and a light unto [our] path."⁷

As we read about the great souls who have preceded us, we learn that they too had times of discouragement and sorrow. We learn that they persevered in spite of hardship, in spite of adversity, sometimes even in spite of their own weaknesses. We learn that they too continued to press forward, one step after another. We can be

like those righteous souls Lehi spoke of who “caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness, . . . even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree.”⁸

We also have a living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. He provides counsel and prophetic direction for us in our day.

Through his counsel and our prayers, we can reach into the heavens and personally commune with the Infinite. Through faith, heaven itself can be moved in our behalf. Doors will be opened and answers received.

Joseph Smith endured in walking the path

Think of Joseph Smith, who, as a young boy surrounded by confusing and contradictory voices, yearned to know which of all the churches was right and true. He too felt blind—surrounded by the darkness of his day. After reading the book of James in the New Testament, he believed the words of the ancient Apostle who said, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”⁹ Joseph believed these words, and on a spring morning in 1820 he retired to a grove of trees to lift up his soul in prayer and ask his Heavenly Father for wisdom.

The answer to his prayer filled him with light and direction. Our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son appeared to him. Their direction swept away the thick darkness that had seized him and threatened to destroy him. It forever swept away his confusion.

From that moment until his martyrdom nearly a quarter of a century later, Joseph Smith committed himself to the path shown him by the Father and the Son. Consider how painful his days were. Consider the suffering and the persecution he had to endure. Yet he continued,

step by step, never giving up, never doubting that if he only did what he could, his Heavenly Father would make up the rest.

Walk in the right direction, step by step

My brothers and sisters, our time here is so precious and so short. How well I understand the prophet Jacob when he said, “Our lives passed away like as it were unto us a dream.”¹⁰

All too soon our time is finished. While we can—while we have the time to complete our work—let us walk in the right direction, taking one step after another.

That is easy enough. We don’t have to be perfect today. We don’t have to be better than someone else. All we have to do is to be the very best we can.

God will be with you, guiding every step

Though you may feel weary, though you sometimes may not be able to see the way, know that your Father in Heaven will never forsake His righteous followers. He will not leave you comfortless. He will be at your side, yes, guiding you every step of the way.

Listen to these beautiful words written by President Joseph Fielding Smith as he describes this life:

Does the journey seem long,
The path rugged and steep?
Are there briars and thorns on the way?
Do sharp stones cut your feet
As you struggle to rise
To the heights thru the heat of the day?

Is your heart faint and sad,
Your soul weary within,
As you toil 'neath your burden of care?
Does the load heavy seem
You are forced now to lift?
Is there no one your burden to share?

Let your heart be not faint
Now the journey's begun;
There is One who still beckons to you.

So look upward in joy
And take hold of his hand;
He will lead you to heights that are
new—

A land holy and pure,
Where all trouble doth end,
And your life shall be free from all sin,
Where no tears shall be shed,
For no sorrows remain.
Take his hand and with him enter in.¹¹

I hope that we will have the courage to begin climbing our own Mount Everest, that we may progress in life's journey step by step until we reach the best that is within us.

Our Heavenly Father lives and knows and loves each one of us. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of all, and yes, the Prince of Peace. Joseph Smith is the prophet of the Restoration, and President Gordon B. Hinckley is our prophet, seer, and revelator on the earth today. I bear this testi-

mony, and it is my testimony to you that you will be happy and content if you only do your best. This is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. "Everest Grueling for Blind Man," *Deseret News*, 5 June 2001, A12; see also Karl Taro Greenfeld, "Blind to Failure," *Time*, 18 June 2001.
2. *The Teachings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Larry E. Dahl and Donald Q. Cannon (1997), 519.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
4. Mosiah 4:27.
5. See <http://www.coachwooden.com/bio.shtml>
6. <http://www.coachwooden.com/bodysuccess.shtml>
7. Psalm 119:105.
8. 1 Nephi 8:24.
9. James 1:5.
10. Jacob 7:26.
11. "Does the Journey Seem Long?" *Hymns*, no. 127.

Elder L. Whitney Clayton

"Help thou mine unbelief"

On one occasion the Savior encountered a great multitude of people who were listening to a discussion between His disciples and the scribes. He then asked the scribes, "What question ye with them?"

A certain man, kneeling down to Him, answered that he had asked the disciples to cast an evil spirit out of his son, but "they could not." The father begged Him, saying, "But if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.

"Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

"And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

The Savior then rebuked the evil spirit and charged it to "come out of him, and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him."¹

All of us have come face-to-face with difficult, even desperate hours when with tears we have fallen on our knees and pleaded as did this father, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

Just as the Savior stood ready to help this father whose son was "sore vexed,"² so is He ready to help our unbelief today so that with faith we can survive our mortal struggles and "come off conqueror."³

Faith is developed by obedience

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the first principle of the gospel. It is more than

mere belief.⁴ Faith is a “hope for things which are not seen, which are true.”⁵ “Faith always moves its possessor to . . . physical and mental action.”⁶ “To have faith in Jesus Christ means to have such trust in him that we obey whatever he commands. There is no faith where there is no obedience.”⁷

Faith comes from hearing the word of God and is a spiritual gift.⁸ Faith increases when we not only hear, but act on the word of God as well, in obedience to the truths we have been taught.⁹

Mary’s reply to the angel’s announcement provides an excellent example. Mary was told by the angel Gabriel: “Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest.” Mary then obediently said to Gabriel, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.”¹⁰

On another occasion, “Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

“And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

“And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.”¹¹

After the Savior’s Resurrection, Peter and other disciples went “a fishing.” However, “that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.” He told them to “cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.”¹²

We find similar faith-developing obedience in the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Following the angel Moroni’s all-night-long visits with him in September 1823, Joseph went to work in the morning with his father. Having been awake nearly

all night, he “found [his] strength so exhausted as to render [him] entirely unable” to perform “the necessary labors of the day.” His father told him to return home, and he “started with the intention of going to the house; but [his] strength entirely failed [him], and [he] fell helpless on the ground, and for a time was quite unconscious of anything.”

When he awoke, he “looked up, and beheld the same messenger standing over [his] head, surrounded by light as before.” Joseph was commanded to “go to [his] father and tell him of the vision and commandments which [he] had received.” Although weary, he obediently “returned to [his] father in the field, and rehearsed the whole matter to him.” His father replied “that it was of God, and told [him] to go and do as commanded.” Exhausted but obedient, Joseph then “left the field, and went to the place where the messenger had told [him] the plates were deposited,” a journey of several miles.¹³

Doing the things that matter most

Each day we decide what we will do and what we will not do, among myriad alternatives. When we choose to obey the commandments cheerfully as our first priority, neither murmuring about nor measuring the things He commands, we become the handmaids of the Lord and fishers of men and cast our nets on the right side of our own ships. We simply go and do the things the Lord has commanded, even when we are weary, trusting that He will help us to do exactly as He asks.¹⁴ As we do so, the Lord helps our unbelief, and our faith becomes powerful, vibrant, and unshakable. The Prophet Joseph wrote from Liberty Jail:

“Therefore, dearly beloved brethren, let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance [or faith], to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed.”¹⁵

No matter who we are or where we live, there is much about our daily lives that is routine and repetitive. As we go about this dailiness, we must be deliberate about doing the things that matter most. These must-do things include making room first for the minimum daily requirements of faithful behavior: true obedience, humble prayer, serious scripture study, and selfless service to others. No other daily vitamins strengthen the muscles of our faith as fast as these actions. We also must remember that genuine fasting fosters strong faith. This is especially important as we faithfully seek to fix deeply embedded character flaws which go "not out but by prayer and fasting."¹⁶

How to develop strong faith

Developing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is a step-by-step, line-upon-line, and precept-upon-precept process. We promote the process of strengthening our faith when we do what is right; increased faith always follows as a consequence.¹⁷ If we exercise our faith daily with prayer, study, and obedience, the Savior helps our unbelief, and our faith becomes a shield to "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."¹⁸ Alma taught that we may "withstand every temptation of the devil, with [our] faith on the Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁹ However, we can neither ignore nor reject the essential ingredients of faith and then expect to reap a rich harvest.

We see countless examples of faith developing in Church members today. As young men, young women, and mature couples accept calls to serve missions, as couples prepare themselves in virtue to be married in the holy temple, as parents train up children in the way they should go,²⁰ they strengthen their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As we keep the Sabbath day holy, magnify our callings, pay tithes and offerings, welcome new members into Church circles, and invite friends and neighbors to learn gospel truths, we

strengthen our faith. When we choose to abandon our sins and repent willingly, and when we fall to our knees in prayer in good times as well as in turbulent times, we develop strong faith.

We then find occurring in our own lives an experience described in the Book of Mormon: "Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God."²¹

I know that the Savior lives and that He helps our unbelief. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Mark 9:14–29; Matthew 17:14–21.
2. Matthew 17:15.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 10:5.
4. See Articles of Faith 1:4; Bible Dictionary, "Faith," 669–70.
5. Alma 32:21; see also Hebrews 11:1; Ether 12:6.
6. Bible Dictionary, 670.
7. *Gospel Principles* (1997), 118.
8. See Romans 10:17; Moroni 10:11; Bible Dictionary, 669–70.
9. See Bible Dictionary, 669–70.
10. Luke 1:31–32, 38.
11. Matthew 4:18–20.
12. John 21:3–4, 6.
13. Joseph Smith—History 1:48–50.
14. See 1 Nephi 3:7.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 123:17.
16. Matthew 17:21; see also Mark 9:29.
17. See Bible Dictionary, 669.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 27:17.
19. Alma 37:33.
20. See Proverbs 22:6.
21. Helaman 3:35.

President Monson

Thank you, Brethren. I have it on good authority that when Elder Joseph

B. Wirthlin played championship football at the collegiate level, his nickname was "Swiftly."

The choir and congregation will now sing "Come, Ye Children of the Lord." At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Christoffel Golden Jr. and Walter F. Gon-

zález of the Seventy will address us. They will be followed by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve.

The choir and congregation sang "Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

Elder Christoffel Golden Jr.

Our Father's plan

In a revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith sometime in June 1830, we are told of our Heavenly Father's declared intention: "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."¹ According to this decree, the Father's desire is to provide all of us with the opportunity to receive a fulness of joy, even the fulness that He possesses in His perfected and glorified state.²

Premortal life

During these momentous latter days, we declare that God our Eternal Father lives. We testify that we existed in His presence, prior to this life, as His spirit children. During our premortal existence we were tutored in conditions that provided us with the opportunity to develop our talents and abilities. In that blessed premortal abode, we were "left to choose good or evil." Alma states that we chose good by exercising "great faith" and performing "good works." Thus, we kept our first estate, while our Father, in turn, fore-ordained us to receive certain privileges in this lifetime.³

Mortal life

Likewise, latter-day revelation reveals that our Heavenly Father ordained a great plan of happiness for all of His spirit children who had kept their first estate.⁴ It

embraced the prospect that we could one day become like our Father in Heaven and possess all of the attributes and rights He now enjoys. The Apostle Peter reminded the Saints that our Lord's "divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness," so that "ye might be partakers of the divine nature."⁵ Peter's statement may be considered bold, and we admit that it would take a lifetime, and more, to accomplish; nevertheless, his thoughts find resonance in the Savior's charge, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."⁶

The Father's plan also required all who had kept their first estate to be tried and tested in a mortal or second estate. In this environment, we are required to act for ourselves and prove to ourselves and to God whether we would keep all of His commandments and overcome sin and opposition.⁷

The Fall and the Atonement

Since the Fall of Adam and because of the nature of mortal mankind, man developed a predisposition to violate the laws of God and thereby become enslaved to the demands of justice. Nevertheless, because of our Heavenly Father's foreknowledge and through the great plan of happiness, He devised a plan of mercy. It furnished a way for the exacting requirements of justice to be appeased through an infinite Atonement.⁸

Jesus Christ, as the chosen of the Father from the beginning,⁹ possessed all the qualifications and attributes required to harmonize the laws of justice and mercy through His Atonement.¹⁰

The Atonement, King Benjamin taught, allows man to put off the natural man as we yield "to the enticings of the Holy Spirit."¹¹ Consequently, it is our testimony that all who come unto Christ by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel are able to exercise faith unto "everlasting salvation and eternal life."¹²

The Restoration

We also testify that compliance with all of the conditions of the great plan of happiness, after the Great Apostasy, was not possible until our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, reestablished the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith.¹³

Our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, declared, "The Prophet Joseph's account of these events is true, that the Father bore witness of the divinity of His Son, that the Son instructed the boy prophet, and that there followed a train of events which led to the organization of 'the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth.'"¹⁴

It is the heartfelt desire of all the faithful to keep their second estate. We are not left alone to find our way back home. The Lord has set up His kingdom on the earth wherein the elect of God can be gathered.

Resources to help us return to God

In the Lord's loving care, He has provided us with all of the essential resources required to forge our way through the many pitfalls placed before us by the evil one.¹⁵

These indispensable resources include the ordinances and covenants of the gospel, in which the power of the Atonement is manifest.¹⁶ We also have the holy

scriptures, which provide us with a standard to discern truth from error.¹⁷

Importantly, we live in a blessed day in which the Lord has placed His watchmen, the living apostles and prophets, in our midst. They hold all the necessary keys and authority which are essential to administering the ordinances of salvation and exaltation.¹⁸

Above all, as baptized members of the church of Christ, we have the incomparable gift of the Holy Ghost. The Savior, on the eve of His suffering for our sins, told His disciples that "the Spirit . . . will guide you into all truth."¹⁹

Blessings for the faithful

John the Revelator, in heavenly vision, saw the fulfillment of our Father's plan and recorded the condition of those who had come out of great tribulation and had washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb. He saw how they who had overcome the world stood before the throne of God and served Him in His temple. The Lord was in their midst, while the faithful hungered and thirsted no more, and God wiped away all the tears from their eyes.²⁰

We need not fear but with faith follow our Heavenly Father's great plan of happiness. Our call to all is to come and receive of the grace and mercy of the Lord, for He is mighty to save and will never forsake us!²¹

May the Lord bless us in this great endeavor, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Moses 1:39.
2. See Moses 7:67; Doctrine and Covenants 76:69–70.
3. See Alma 13:3–13; 1 Peter 1:20.
4. See Alma 42:8.
5. 2 Peter 1:3–4.
6. Matthew 5:48; see also 3 Nephi 12:48.
7. See Matthew 7:21; Revelation 3:21; Doctrine and Covenants 98:14–15.

8. See Alma 42:15.
9. See Moses 4:2.
10. See *Doctrines of the Gospel* (Church Educational System student manual, 1986), 22.
11. Mosiah 3:19.
12. Mosiah 5:15; see also Moroni 10:32.
13. See 1 Nephi 11:13–36; 2 Nephi 3:5–11.
14. “Special Witnesses of Christ,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2001, 20–21; Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.
15. See Moses 4:3–4; Doctrine and Covenants 93:39.
16. See John 3:5; Mosiah 5:1–2; Doctrine and Covenants 76:50–54.
17. See Alma 4:19; 31:5.
18. See Matthew 10:1–15; Doctrine and Covenants 1:14–15; 21:1–8.
19. John 16:13.
20. Revelation 7:14–17.
21. See Deuteronomy 7:7–18.

Elder Walter F. González

Writing gospel principles in our hearts

English is the language of the Restoration, and in this conference session English spoken with an accent symbolizes Church growth all over the world. I'm from South America, where the Church has grown tremendously. When I joined the Church 30 years ago, we had 108,000 members and 6 stakes. At that time we had no temple on our continent. Now we have 2,600,000 members and 560 stakes. Eleven temples are functioning, and two are under construction.

Nephi, the son of Lehi, said: “But I, Nephi, have written what I have written, and I esteem it as of great worth, and especially unto my people. For I pray continually for them by day, and mine eyes water my pillow by night, because of them” (2 Nephi 33:3).

This heartfelt cry is being answered in our day through the Book of Mormon. Nephi was praying that the word he had “written in weakness would be made strong unto [us]; for it persuadeth [us] to do good; it maketh known unto [us] of [our] fathers; and it speaketh of Jesus, and persuadeth [us] to believe in him, and to endure to the end, which is life eternal” (2 Nephi 33:4).

I have seen how the doctrine and gospel principles are guiding more and more members in South America. Our task both in South America and every-

where else continues to be seeking for the principles found in the scriptures and the teachings of the prophets and writing them “not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart” (2 Corinthians 3:3). Such establishing of gospel principles requires time. Time is required both to be exposed to the truths of the gospel and to apply them in our lives.

For most South American members, our exposure to gospel principles started with devoting time to hearing the discussions and testimonies from the missionaries. We took time to listen, and now we cannot help but feel profound gratitude to the missionaries who served in our countries. Our deep gratitude is not only to the missionaries but also to the families from which they came. (Now thousands of South Americans are sending their own children to serve missions to share the glad tidings of the restored gospel.) Those of us who are first-generation Church members also feel great gratitude for our nonmember parents, who took time to teach us righteous principles that prepared us to recognize and welcome the gospel message.

Need to apply, not just know, principles

Missionaries initiated the task of learning doctrine and gospel principles; however, maintaining the gospel in our

hearts is an ongoing task which requires time. Knowledge alone is not enough. We must take time to apply the principles in our lives. For example, Nephi knew that the Lord answers our prayers. He applied his knowledge centuries ago and thus brought everlasting blessings upon us today. If we read carefully, we see that Nephi prayed with great faith unto God because he knew that God was going to hear his cry (see 2 Nephi 33:3). How grateful we are for Nephi's taking time to apply his knowledge. How grateful we are that Nephi wrote this knowledge in his heart "not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God."

Like scholarship, discipleship also requires time. Sometimes we recognize that a principle is true, but we don't change our priorities to make time to live the principle. In so doing, we miss valuable opportunities to develop a change of heart as we are taught by the Holy Ghost.

Consider for a moment the example of Enos, who delayed the application of the knowledge he received from his father. He eventually took time to live up to that knowledge; a number of blessings flowed to us because he did. Enos tells us that it was when he went to hunt beasts in the forest that his father's teachings about eternal life and the joy of the Saints deeply touched his heart, so he decided to devote time to praying (see Enos 1:3-4). In divine response to his prayer, the Lord covenanted with Enos that He would bring the records forth unto the Lamanites in His own due time (see Enos 1:16). God answers our prayers. Enos took this principle from the stone tablets and wrote it in the fleshy tablets of his heart, thus obtaining a higher level of knowledge. This brought blessings upon both him and us in this dispensation.

Overcome hindrances to living the gospel

A number of things hinder our good intentions of devoting time to learning and especially to living a gospel principle. For example, the abundance of information about any specific subject which comes from various media can be overwhelming. Such an abundance of information may cause some to be "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7).

Each of us can evaluate ourselves, determine which things are preventing us from taking time to live a gospel principle, then repent and make the necessary adjustments so that we can have time to apply that gospel principle in our lives. If we do so, the Lord has promised that we'll have an increased understanding of His truths as Enos did. The Savior declared, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17).

Living the gospel brings joy and peace

Making time in our lives to learn, to ponder, and especially to practice gospel principles will bring us the joy and peace which come from the Spirit. The Church will continue to blossom in South America and other parts of the world because more and more members will continue to write gospel principles not with ink, but with the Holy Ghost; not in tablets of stone, but in the fleshy tablets of their hearts. I testify that scriptural truths can develop from intellectual appreciation to our becoming Christlike as we take time to incorporate those truths into our lives. I know the Savior is the Living Christ. Of these things I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Miraculous growth of the Church today

Surely and steadily The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints moves across the earth. In Daniel's language it is "the stone . . . cut out of the mountain without hands."¹ Isaiah described what he foresaw as "a marvellous work and a wonder."² It is a wonder! The restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ is filled with miracles, revelations, manifestations of every kind. Many of those have come in our lifetime.

I was 17 years old before there was any stake of Zion anywhere outside North America. There are now well over 1,000 stakes on those distant continents and isles of the sea. We now have 125 temples operating or announced, more than half of which (64) are outside the United States. Again, I was nearly 15 before there was even one temple beyond the states and provinces of the USA and Canada.

We have lived to see the revelation extending the priesthood to all worthy males of appropriate age, a blessing which has accelerated the work in many parts of the world. We have lived to see the publication of our scriptures, wholly or in part, in nearly 100 languages. We have lived to see the long-awaited creation of the Quorums of the Seventy, with great men drawn from many nations and, in turn, deployed to serve in many nations. Most recently President Hinckley has announced a Perpetual Education Fund that has the potential to bless many in even the most distant locations of the earth eventually. And so the internationalizing of the Church goes on.

Ending of assessments and fund raising

I give this brief summary to highlight another miracle, another revelation, if you will, that may have been overlooked by the general membership of the Church.

In a way it was intended to be transparent to the public eye. I speak of the decision made by the Brethren just over a decade ago to cease placing any special assessments or other fund-raising obligations upon the members of the Church at home or abroad.

Inasmuch as this decision was made amidst the very international growth I have just described, how could this be done financially? How could we go to more and more distant locations at the very moment we were removing all ancillary assessments from our people? Logic in the situation might have suggested exactly the opposite course of action.

How was it done? I will tell you how it was done—with the wholehearted belief on the part of the presiding Brethren that the Lord's principles of tithing and freewill offerings would be honored by even the newest member of the Church and that loyalty to such divine principles would see us through.

I was not in the Quorum of the Twelve when that momentous decision was made, but I can imagine the discussions that were held and the act of faith required within the presiding councils of the Church. What if the Brethren were to cease assessments and the Saints did *not* pay their tithes and offerings—what then? So far as I know, that thought was never seriously entertained. They went forward in faith—faith in God, faith in revealed principle, faith in us. They never looked back. That was a magnificent (if nearly unnoticed) day in the maturing of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Five reasons to faithfully pay tithing

But to honor that decision, we must be equally mature as individual members of the Church. May I, then, suggest five reasons why all of us, rich or poor, long-

time member or newest convert, should faithfully pay our tithes and offerings.

To teach your children and grandchildren

First, do so for the sake of your children and grandchildren, the rising generation, who could now, if we are not careful, grow up in the Church with absolutely no understanding as to how their temples, chapels, seminaries, and socials are provided. Teach your children that many of the blessings of the Church are available to them because you and they give tithes and offerings to the Church. Teach them that those blessings could come virtually no other way.

Then take your children to tithing settlement with you, just as President Howard W. Hunter's grandson was taken with his father several years ago. In that experience the bishop indicated his pleasure in young Brother Hunter's wanting to pay a full tithing. In the process of receiving the coins, he asked the lad if he thought the gospel were true. As the boy handed over his full tithing of 14 cents, this seven-year-old said he guessed the gospel was true but "it sure costs a lot of money."³ Well, the buildings, programs, and materials I have mentioned do have an attached cost. That is not an unimportant lesson for our children to learn in their youth.

To claim the Lord's promised blessings

Second, pay your tithing to rightfully claim the blessings promised those who do so. "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."⁴

After she had lost her husband in the martyrdom at Nauvoo and made her way west with five fatherless children, Mary Fielding Smith continued in her poverty to pay tithing. When someone at the tithing office inappropriately suggested one day that she should not contribute a tenth

of the only potatoes she had been able to raise that year, she cried out to the man:

"William, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Would you deny me a blessing? If I did not pay my tithing, I should expect the Lord to withhold His blessings from me. I pay my tithing, not only because it is a law of God, but because I expect a blessing by doing it. [I need a blessing.] By keeping this and other laws, I expect . . . to be able to provide for my family."⁵

I can't list *all* the ways that blessings will come from obedience to this principle, but I testify *many* will come in spiritual ways that go well beyond economics. In my life, for example, I have seen God's promise fulfilled that He would "rebuken the devourer for [my sake]."⁶ That blessing of protection against evil has been poured out upon me and on my loved ones beyond any capacity I have to adequately acknowledge. But I believe that divine safety has come, at least in part, because of our determination, individually and as a family, to pay tithing.

To keep material possessions in perspective

Third, pay your tithing as a declaration that possession of material goods and the accumulation of worldly wealth are *not* the uppermost goals of your existence. As one young husband and father, living on a student budget, recently told me:

"Perhaps our most pivotal moments as Latter-day Saints come when we have to swim directly against the current of the culture in which we live. Tithing provides just such a moment. Living in a world that emphasizes material acquisition and cultivates distrust for anyone or anything that has designs on our money, we shed that self-absorption to give freely, trustingly, and generously. By this act, we say—indeed—we are different, that we are God's peculiar people. In a society that tells us money is our most important asset, we declare emphatically it is not."⁷

President Spencer W. Kimball once spoke of a man who prided himself on his vast acreage and remarkable holdings—groves and vineyards, herds and fields, ponds and homes and possessions of every kind. He prided himself on these but to the end of his life was unwilling to tithe on them or even acknowledge that they were gifts from God. President Kimball then spoke at the man's funeral, noting that this land baron was laid to rest in an oblong piece of soil measuring "the length of a tall man, the width of a heavy one."⁸ In answer to the age-old question "How much did he leave?" he reassured the answer will always be, "All of it." So we would do well to lay up treasures in heaven, where not taxes but doctrines give meaning to words like *estate*, *inheritance*, *testament*, and *will*.⁹

To give God His rightful due

Fourth, pay your tithes and offerings out of honesty and integrity because they are God's rightful due. Surely one of the most piercing lines in all of scripture is Jehovah's thundering inquiry, "Will a man rob God?" And we ask, "Wherein have we robbed thee?" He answers, "In tithes and offerings."¹⁰

Paying tithing is *not* a token gift we are somehow charitably bestowing upon God. Paying tithing is discharging a debt. Elder James E. Talmage once described this as a contract between us and the Lord. He imagined the Lord saying:

"You have need of many things in this world—food, clothing, and shelter for your family . . . , the common comforts of life. . . . You shall have the means of acquiring these things; but remember they are mine, and I require of you the payment of a rental upon that which I give into your hands. However, your life will not be one of uniform increase . . . , [so] instead of doing as mortal landlords do—requir[ing] you to . . . pay in advance, whatever your fortunes or . . . prospects

may be—you shall pay me . . . [only] when you have received; and you shall pay me in accordance with what you receive. If it so be that in one year your income is abundant, then . . . [your 10 percent will be a] little more; and if it be so that the next year is one of distress and your income is not what it was, then . . . [your 10 percent will be] less. . . . [Whatever your circumstance, the tithe will be fair.]"

"Have you ever found a landlord on earth who was willing to make that kind of [equitable] contract with you?" Elder Talmage asks. "When I consider the liberality of it all," he says, "I feel in my heart that I could scarcely raise my countenance to . . . Heaven . . . if I tried to defraud [God] out of that [which is rightfully His]."¹¹

To express love to God

This leads to a fifth reason to pay our tithes and offerings. We should pay them as a personal expression of love to a generous and merciful Father in Heaven. Through His grace, God has dealt bread to the hungry and clothing to the poor. At various times in our lives, that will include all of us, either temporally or spiritually. For every one of us the gospel has broken forth as the light of the morning, driving back the darkness of ignorance and sorrow, fear and despair. In nation after nation His children have called, and the Lord has answered. Through the movement of His gospel across the world, God is relieving the burdens of the weary and setting free those that are oppressed. His loving goodness has made our lives, rich or poor, near or far, "like a watered garden, . . . [from] a spring of water . . . [that faileth] not."¹²

I express my deepest gratitude for every blessing of the gospel of Jesus Christ, especially that greatest of all gifts, the exemplary life and atoning death of God's Only Begotten Son. I know I can never repay heaven for any of this benevolence,

but there are many ways I need to *try* to show my thankfulness. One of those ways is in the payment of tithes and freewill offerings. I *want* to give something back, but I never want it to be (in King David's words) "that which doth cost me nothing."¹³

I testify that the principle of tithing is of God, taught to us in such scriptural simplicity that we cannot doubt its divinity. May we all claim its blessings forever, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Daniel 2:45.
2. Isaiah 29:14.
3. Quoted by David B. Haight in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 57; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 42.
4. Malachi 3:10.
5. In Conference Report, Apr. 1900, 48.
6. Malachi 3:11.
7. Personal correspondence.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1968, 74; or *Improvement Era*, June 1968, 82.
9. See Matthew 6:19–21.
10. Malachi 3:8.
11. *The Lord's Tenth* (pamphlet, 1968), 10–11.

12. Isaiah 58:11; see also Isaiah 58:6–10.
13. 2 Samuel 24:24.

President Monson

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene here in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will follow immediately thereafter.

As you leave the conference this afternoon, we ask you to obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

We express gratitude to the combined choir from Utah County for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "Testimony." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Sheldon F. Child of the Seventy.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

"Who is my neighbour?"

It may very well have been a beautiful, crisp autumn day like this. The Savior was sitting, teaching some of His disciples, when a man identified only as "a certain lawyer" stood and asked Him, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus knew the man's heart and understood the question was a thinly veiled attempt to get Him to say something contrary to the law of Moses.

The Savior responded to the question with two questions of His own: "What is written in the law? how readest thou?"

As you might expect, the lawyer was able to recite the law: "Thou shalt love the

Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself."

"Thou hast answered right," the Savior said, "This do, and thou shalt live."

But the lawyer wasn't satisfied with that. Knowing that there were strict rules and beliefs among the Jews regarding association with those not of the faith, he pressed the Lord for more information, hoping to trap Him in controversy: "And who is my neighbour?" he asked.

It was time, once again, to teach. Jesus drew upon one of His favorite and most effective teaching techniques: a parable, perhaps one of the most beloved and

well-known parables in all of Christendom.

You know the parable, how a man from Jerusalem was on his way to Jericho and fell among thieves and was left half dead. A certain priest passed by on the other side; neither did a Levite stop to help. Then Jesus taught:

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

"And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him."

Then Jesus asked the lawyer one more question: "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?"

The lawyer replied, "He that shewed mercy on him."

Then Jesus delivered His final instruction to the lawyer—and to all who have read the parable of the good Samaritan: "Go, and do thou likewise" (see Luke 10:25–37).

Love neighbors despite differences

Every time I read this parable I am impressed with its power and simplicity. But have you ever wondered why the Savior chose to make the hero of this story a Samaritan? There was considerable antipathy between the Jews and the Samaritans at the time of Christ. Under normal circumstances these two groups avoided association with each other. It would still be a good, instructive parable if the man who fell among thieves had been rescued by a brother Jew.

His deliberate use of Jews and Samaritans clearly teaches that we are all neighbors and that we should love, esteem, respect, and serve one another despite our deepest differences—including religious, political, and cultural differences.

That instruction continues today to be part of the teachings of The Church

of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In enumerating the key doctrines of the restored Church, Joseph Smith said that while "we claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience," we also "allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may" (Articles of Faith 1:11).

True disciples reach out with love

Thankfully, many of our members understand this doctrine and live it during the course of their daily lives. I recently read a news account of a tragic death in a community here in Utah. A grieving young widow was quoted:

"We've been overwhelmed by support. We're not Mormon, but the local ward here has been all over us with meals and help and words of comfort. It's been a total outpouring of love, and we appreciate it" (quoted in Dick Harmon, "Former Ute's Death Leaves Wife Coping, Wondering," *Daily Herald* [Provo, Utah], 11 Aug. 2001, A3).

That's just as it should be. If we are truly disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, we will reach out with love and understanding to all of our neighbors at all times, particularly in times of need. A recent *Church News* carried a story of two women who are dear friends, a "Jewish physician from New York and [a] stay-at-home [Latter-day Saint] mom of six from Utah, both a long way from home in Dallas [Texas]." Our member reported:

"If our friendship had been put through a computer matching service, I doubt we would have made it past the first hurdle. . . .

" . . . A woman with a busy medical practice, I assumed, would have little desire to discuss the color of the hospitality napkins for PTA.

"Funny thing about assumptions—they can cut away the very roots of something that could flourish and grow if given a chance. I am forever grateful that as-

sumptions were cast aside" (Shauna Erickson, "Unlikely Friends Sharing a Lifetime," *Church News*, 18 Aug. 2001, 10).

Perceptions and assumptions can be very dangerous and unfair. There are some of our members who may fail to reach out with friendly smiles, warm handshakes, and loving service to all of their neighbors. At the same time, there may be those who move into our neighborhoods who are not of our faith who come with negative preconceptions about the Church and its members. Surely good neighbors should put forth every effort to understand each other and to be kind to one another regardless of religion, nationality, race, or culture.

Practice the doctrine of inclusion

Occasionally I hear of members of-fending those of other faiths by overlooking them and leaving them out. This can occur especially in communities where our members are the majority. I have heard about narrow-minded parents who tell children that they cannot play with a particular child in the neighborhood simply because his or her family does not belong to our Church. This kind of behavior is not in keeping with the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. I cannot comprehend why any member of our Church would allow these kinds of things to happen. I have been a member of this Church my entire life. I have been a full-time missionary, twice a bishop, a mission president, a Seventy, and now an Apostle. I have never taught—nor have I ever heard taught—a doctrine of exclusion. I have never heard the members of this Church urged to be anything but loving, kind, tolerant, and benevolent to our friends and neighbors of other faiths.

The Lord expects a great deal from us. Parents, please teach your children and practice yourselves the principle of inclusion of others and not exclusion because of religious, political, or cultural differences.

While it is true that we declare to the world that the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith and we urge our members to share their faith and testimonies with others, it has never been the policy of the Church that those who choose not to listen or to accept our message should be shunned or ignored. Indeed, the opposite is true. President Gordon B. Hinckley has repeatedly reminded us of this special obligation that we have as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. I quote just two:

"Each of us is an individual. Each of us is different. There must be respect for those differences" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 661).

"We must work harder to build mutual respect, an attitude of forbearance, with tolerance one for another regardless of the doctrines and philosophies which we may espouse. Concerning these you and I may disagree. But we can do so with respect and civility" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 665).

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we understand that we are perceived by some to be "a peculiar people" (1 Peter 2:9). Our doctrines and beliefs are important to us. We embrace them and cherish them. I am not suggesting for a moment that we shouldn't. On the contrary, our peculiarity and the uniqueness of the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ are indispensable elements in offering the people of the world a clear choice. Neither am I suggesting that we should associate in any relationship that would place us or our families at spiritual risk. We must understand, however, that not everyone is going to accept our doctrine of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. For the most part, our neighbors not of our faith are good, honorable people—every bit as good and honorable as we strive to be. They care about their families, just like we do. They want to make the world

a better place, just like we do. They are kind and loving and generous and faithful, just like we seek to be. Nearly 25 years ago the First Presidency declared:

"Our message . . . is one of special love and concern for the eternal welfare of all men and women, regardless of religious belief, race, or nationality, knowing that we are truly brothers and sisters because we are sons and daughters of the same Eternal Father" (First Presidency statement, 15 Feb. 1978).

That is our doctrine—a doctrine of inclusion. That is what we believe. That is what we have been taught. Of all people on this earth, we should be the most loving, the kindest, and the most tolerant because of that doctrine.

How to avoid making others feel excluded

May I suggest three simple things we can do to avoid making others in our neighborhoods feel excluded?

First, get to know your neighbors. Learn about their families, their work, their views. Get together with them, if they are willing, and do so without being pushy and without any ulterior motives. Friendship should never be offered as a means to an end; it can and should be an end unto itself. I received a letter from a woman who recently moved to Utah, a small part of which I quote:

"I must tell you, Elder Ballard, that when I greet my neighbors, or if I wave to them, they do not acknowledge my greeting. If I pass them while taking my morning or evening walk, my salutation is not returned. Other people of color consistently express similar negative responses to friendly gestures."

If members of the Church are among her neighbors, surely they must know that this should not happen. Let us cultivate meaningful relationships of mutual trust and understanding with people from different backgrounds and beliefs.

Second, I believe it would be good if we eliminated a couple of phrases from

our vocabulary: *nonmember* and *non-Mormon*. Such phrases can be demeaning and even belittling. Personally, I don't consider myself to be a "non-Catholic" or a "non-Jew." I am a Christian. I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That is how I prefer to be identified—for who and what I am, as opposed to being identified for what I am not. Let us extend that same courtesy to those who live among us. If a collective description is needed, then "neighbors" seems to work well in most cases.

And third, if neighbors become testy or frustrated because of some disagreement with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or with some law we support for moral reasons, please don't suggest to them—even in a humorous way—that they consider moving someplace else. I cannot comprehend how any member of our Church can even think such a thing! Our pioneer ancestors were driven from place to place by uninformed and intolerant neighbors. They experienced extraordinary hardship and persecution because they thought, acted, and believed differently from others. If our history teaches us nothing else, it should teach us to respect the rights of all people to peacefully coexist with one another.

Stand together for the common good

I now speak to all those who are not of our faith. If there are issues of concern, let us talk about them. We want to be helpful. Please understand, however, that our doctrines and teachings are set by the Lord, so sometimes we will have to agree to disagree with you, but we can do so without being disagreeable. In our communities we can and must work together in an atmosphere of courtesy, respect, and civility. Here in Utah, a group of concerned citizens formed the Alliance for Unity. This effort has been endorsed by our Church, as well as other churches and organizations. One of its purposes is "to seek to help build a community where dif-

fering viewpoints are acknowledged and valued" ("Alliance for Unity: Statement of Purpose" [accompanying First Presidency letter of 20 Sept. 2001]). Perhaps there has never been a more important time for neighbors all around the world to stand together for the common good of one another.

"Love one another"

Just hours before He began the painful physical and spiritual processes of the Atonement, the Savior met with His Apostles to partake of the Feast of the Passover—His Last Supper—and to give them the final instructions He would give them in mortality. Among these teachings is the stirring, life-changing declaration:

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34–35).

That is what Jesus taught His disciples, including "a certain lawyer," through the parable of the good Samaritan. And that is what He is teaching us today through living prophets and apostles. Love one another. Be kind to one another despite our deepest differences. Treat one another with respect and civility. I know and testify that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, and I know that He expects all of us to follow His admonition to be better neighbors, to which I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Testimony."

Elder Sheldon F. Child offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, October 6, 2001, at 6:00 P.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by men of the Tabernacle Choir joined by Melchizedek Priesthood holders from the Salt Lake area. Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford conducted the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, we welcome you to this general priesthood session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, Assembly Hall, BYU Marriott Center, Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by the men of the Tabernacle Choir joined by Melchizedek Priesthood holders from the Salt Lake area, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Come, Rejoice." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Cree-L Kofford of the Seventy.

The choir will then sing "There Is a Green Hill Far Away." After the choir has sung, Elder Robert D. Hales of the

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. He will be followed by Elder Cecil O. Samuelson of the Presidency of the Seventy. We will then be pleased to hear from Elders Steven E. Snow and Keith K. Hilbig of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Come, Rejoice."
Elder Cree-L Kofford offered the invocation.

The choir sang "There Is a Green Hill Far Away."

Elder Robert D. Hales

What a joy it is to stand before the priesthood and address the royal army of God. It is important that we know who we are—sons of God who hold the Aaronic Priesthood and the Melchizedek Priesthood, restored in this dispensation. It is important that we know what we are trying to achieve in life—that is, to return back into the presence of our Heavenly Father with our families. Because we are so blessed, it is also important that we learn and do our duty to God.

New Duty to God program

For many years the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have had great concerns for the welfare of our youth in our troubled times. On September 28, 2001, the First Presidency sent a letter to priesthood leaders in the United States and Canada which stated:

"In January 2000, we introduced an Aaronic Priesthood Achievement program in areas outside the United States and Canada where Scouting was not available. The purpose . . . is to help young men prepare for the Melchizedek Priesthood, the temple endowment, a full-time mission, marriage, and fatherhood. . . . [That international program remains in force and] has now been adapted for use in the United States and Canada to include the important role of Scouting in the development of young men . . . [and will be known as] *Aaronic Priesthood: Fulfilling Our Duty to God*.

"Three guidebooks—*Aaronic Priesthood: Fulfilling Our Duty to God* for deacons, teachers, and priests—explain the program. Young men who complete the requirements outlined in all of these guidebooks will receive the Duty to God Award.

"We also announce a new simplified *Young Women Personal Progress* book and a revised *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet. These materials have been updated to help youth develop greater faith and courage in today's world. In addition, we announce a *Guidebook for Parents and Leaders of Youth* to help parents and leaders strengthen our youth. This guidebook also outlines the important and supportive role of Mutual.

"We desire all young men to strive to earn the Eagle Scout and Duty to God Awards. We desire all young women to strive to earn the Young Womanhood Recognition. As youth work on these goals, they will develop skills and attributes that will lead them to the temple and prepare them for a lifetime of service to their families and the Lord.

"Copies of these materials will be sent to each stake for distribution to wards by December 2001, for implementation in January 2002." Thus ended the First Presidency's historic letter.

Importance of strengthening youth

We live in a very difficult era in the history of the world, when Satan is going

to and fro on the earth among the children of God, doing all manner of evil to thwart the desires of a righteous God. The scriptures teach us that Satan's evil designs upon the peoples of the earth will intensify as the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ draws near at hand (see 2 Thessalonians 2:1–10; D&C 10:33; 52:14; 86:3–10).

There has never been a time in these latter days like today, when the message is being brought forward so strongly by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to have parents along with bishops and priesthood and auxiliary leaders make sure you young men understand who you are and what you can become—not only here in mortality but for the eternities that will follow.

Earning the Duty to God Award

The Duty to God Award will assist young men to meet the future challenges of life and to achieve the purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood.

The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have explained, "We hope you will earn the Duty to God Award and that it will become a symbol of your preparation to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood" (*Aaronic Priesthood: Fulfilling Our Duty to God [Deacon] [2001]*, 4).

As you earn the Duty to God Award, you will complete goals in the following areas:

- Be faithful in your priesthood duties and standards.
- Be involved in family activities.
- Participate in quorum activities.
- Complete a Duty to God service project.
- Accomplish personal goals in each of four categories, the center being priesthood duties: spiritual development; physical development; educational, personal, and career development; and citizenship and social development.

If you will fulfill the requirements for these priesthood duties and personal at-

tributes, you will prepare yourselves for the Melchizedek Priesthood responsibilities and future challenges in your life. I promise you that your achievement of the Duty to God Award will provide you with a living testimony that will sustain you throughout your life.

Where available, Scouting can also help you in this effort. We encourage you to participate in Scouting. Many of the Scouting requirements can fill goals and requirements of the Duty to God certificates.

Scouting is part of the Aaronic Priesthood activity program. The Duty to God Award is a priesthood award, having requirements that will help you develop spiritually and fulfill your priesthood duties.

Fulfilling your duty to God

Some of the great blessings of these programs that have been developed are that as the youth of the Church, you will have a clear understanding of who you are, you will be accountable for your actions, you will take responsibility for the conduct of your life, and you will be able to set goals so that you might achieve what you were sent to earth to achieve. Our plea is that you strive to do your very best.

Young men, get on your knees each day and express to God the desires of your heart. He is the source of all wisdom and will give you answers to your prayers. Be humble and willing to listen to the whisperings of the Spirit. Read the scriptures daily. Strengthen your testimony. Pay tithes and fast offerings. Remember and keep the covenants you made when you were baptized, and renew those covenants each week when you partake of the sacrament. Keeping your baptismal covenants now will help you prepare for the temple covenants you will make in the future.

This is the essence of your duty to God. By fulfilling your duty to God, you

will bring blessings not only to your own life but to the lives of others.

Giving service to others is one of the purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood. As a requirement for the Duty to God Award, at least once each year you will have a service project that will provide an opportunity for significant service to your family, the Church, or the community. As you help and serve others, you will learn that the following scripture is a very essential part of the gospel: "Inasmuch as ye do it unto the least of these, ye do it unto me" (D&C 42:38).

I hope the parents, and the bishops—who are the presidents of the Aaronic Priesthood—will understand that the young men and young women for whom they have responsibility have been prepared to come to earth at this particular time for a sacred and glorious purpose. It is a great blessing to be able to qualify for and then receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. You young men have noble callings to become righteous men, to grow in strength, and to influence others for good. You young men are the future of the Church.

A decade of decision

We have all progressed since we came to earth from the presence of our Heavenly Father. Our first decade in this life was a great learning experience. We were cared for and nurtured. We learned to walk and to talk and control this mortal body. We learned about agency—that choices have consequences. Many of us were baptized at eight years of age, which the scriptures tell us is the age of accountability, when we have the ability to know right from wrong, to know who we are—children of God—why we are here on earth, and what we are trying to accomplish (see D&C 68:25, 27).

From our baptism to the age of 12, our families, priesthood and auxiliary leaders, and teachers have taught us gospel principles and standards that prepare

us to hold the priesthood. The Aaronic Priesthood is called the preparatory priesthood. This second decade of our lives is a preparatory period. It is a time in which we prepare to make the great decisions that lie ahead. We prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, to take upon us our temple covenants, and to fulfill all of our priesthood responsibilities so that we can fulfill our duty to God.

The choices you make today will directly influence the number and kinds of opportunities you will have in the future. Each daily decision will either limit or broaden your opportunities. As you make righteous decisions during this preparatory period, you will be ready to make righteous decisions in the future.

Just think, in the next decade of your life—the decade of your 20s—what decisions will be made: temple worthiness, missionary service, education, career, an eternal companion, and a family. This decade of decision is not a time to fear. It is a time to enjoy the blessings for which you have prepared. "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear" (D&C 38:30).

One of the greatest gifts you were given at baptism was to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. With the gift of the Holy Ghost, you can have inspired guidance to make these important decisions.

During the preparatory period of your lives it is so important that you cultivate spiritual growth, physical growth, education, personal development, career preparation, citizenship, and social skills. These qualities are all part of your priesthood duties and will help in the decisions that lie ahead for the next decades of your life.

Discipleship and duty to God

An important part of fulfilling our duty to God at any age is to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, which means that we accept His invitation to "come, follow me" (Luke 18:22). To follow the Savior requires us to know who He is—the Son

of God—to take His name upon us, to remember His atoning sacrifice, and to keep His commandments. We made these covenants at baptism, and we renew our baptismal covenants each time we partake of the sacrament.

We learn from the Savior in His prayers to His Father in Heaven great lessons of discipleship and duty to God. In His intercessory prayer He teaches, *“I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do”* (John 17:4; italics added).

When Jesus Christ suffered agony in the Garden of Gethsemane for the sins of all mankind, He prayed, *“O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt”* (Matthew 26:39; italics added).

Discipleship and duty to God are shown in the lives of prophets throughout the scriptures. The lessons we learn from these prophets can be applied in our lives.

Young Joseph Smith said, *“I obeyed; I returned to my father in the field, and rehearsed the whole matter to him”* (Joseph Smith—History 1:50; italics added).

Elijah *“went and did according unto the word of the Lord”* (1 Kings 17:5; italics added).

“Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he” (Genesis 6:22; italics added).

Joshua taught his people, *“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. . . . And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey”* (Joshua 24:15, 24; italics added).

Alma said, *“O, remember, my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God”* (Alma 37:35; italics added).

Be a wonderful force for good

The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have counseled each holder of the Aaronic Priesthood:

“You live in a day of great challenges and opportunities. You have been called to make a difference in the world. As a son of God, with the power of the Aaronic Priesthood, you can be a wonderful force for good.”

“You can provide service, giving of your time, talents, and energies without thought of reward. You can fulfill priesthood duties, such as [preparing, passing, and] blessing the sacrament[, gathering fast offerings, helping others,] and serving as a home teacher. You can lift others by your example. You can strengthen yourself, building faith and testimony, living the gospel while you learn it and share it.”

“You have a responsibility to learn what Heavenly Father wants you to do and then to do your best to follow His will. . . .”

“The Lord believes in you and has an important mission for you to do. He will help you as you turn to Him in prayer. Listen for the promptings of the Spirit. Obey the commandments. Make and keep covenants that will prepare you for the temple. Work with your parents and leaders as you set goals and strive to achieve them. You will feel a great sense of accomplishment as you fulfill your duty and prepare for the exciting challenges of the future” (Aaronic Priesthood: *Fulfilling Our Duty to God [Priest]* [2001], 4–5).

Brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood, set your goals now and start working toward earning your Duty to God Award and Eagle Scout Award. You will be blessed for your efforts.

Awaken to a sense of your duty to God

I express my love for the youth of the Church. I have great respect and admiration for the righteous choices you are making each day. You are so faithful in these troubled times despite the many challenges which face you. You are preparing yourselves to be future fathers and priesthood leaders of the Church.

It is so important that all of us understand that we live in the last dispensation of the fulness of time—that we are preparing for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and that the adversary in these last days will be able to loose more evils upon the world. Our prayers are that all the youth of the Church will have the strength to withstand the fiery darts of the adversary and that we as parents and priesthood leaders—yes, we as the shepherds—can help our children remain true and faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I testify to the truthfulness of this work and the restoration of the priesthood in these latter days. I promise you that you will be blessed for your faithfulness and declare with the prophet Alma, “I have said these things unto you that I might awaken you to a sense of your duty to God, that ye may walk blameless before him, that ye may walk after the holy order of God” (Alma 7:22). That each Aaronic Priesthood holder will fulfill his duty to God and return with honor to his Heavenly Father is my prayer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Cecil O. Samuelson Jr.

Samuel's fulfillment of his duty to God

As a young man I was impressed with the Old Testament story of Samuel, whose life had been dedicated to God by his grateful mother, Hannah. While still a lad, he went to live and serve in the temple. One night he was called three times by the Lord and each time answered, “Here am I,”¹ thinking that he had been summoned by his high priest teacher, Eli. Wise Eli, knowing that little “Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him,”² understood that the Lord had called the young boy. He, therefore, taught Samuel how to respond, and when he was next called by the Lord, Samuel answered, “Speak; for thy servant heareth.”³

As we follow the life of Samuel, we recognize that he did fulfill his duty to God and that “Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.”⁴ As a result, Samuel himself became a great prophet and leader.

Resources to help fulfill your duty to God

I hope you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood today understand that, as

Samuel, you also have a sacred duty to God. Samuel had a sainted mother, Hannah, and a great priesthood leader, Eli. Most of you young men, likewise, have wonderful parents and inspired priesthood leaders who care for you and stand ready to assist both you and your parents in your quest to fulfill your duty to God.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said this of you and your generation of young people:

“I have . . . great love for the young men and young women of this Church. . . . How we love you and pray constantly for the genius to help you. Your lives are filled with difficult decisions and with dreams and hopes and longings to find that which will bring you peace and happiness. . . .

“ . . . I make you a promise that God will not forsake you if you will walk in His paths with the guidance of His commandments.”⁵

With this promise of the prophet in mind, let me remind you, as was mentioned by Elder Hales and the letter from the First Presidency, of Church resources that are being made available to assist you in fulfilling your duty to God. The Aaronic Priesthood purposes help you to:

- Become converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ and live its teachings.

- Serve faithfully in priesthood callings and fulfill the responsibilities of priesthood offices.

- Give meaningful service.

- Prepare and live worthily to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and temple ordinances.

- Prepare to serve an honorable full-time mission.

- Obtain as much education as possible.

- Prepare to become a worthy husband and father.

- Give proper respect to women, girls, and children.

The Duty to God Award program will help you achieve these purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood. To qualify for the Duty to God Award, you will need to achieve and complete Aaronic Priesthood purposes; participate in family activities, specific quorum activities, and a Duty to God service project; keep a personal journal; and complete personal goals in each of four categories:

- Spiritual development

- Physical development

- Educational, personal, and career development

- Citizenship and social development

Where Scouting is available, you will note that many of the Scouting requirements can fill necessary expectations for the Duty to God Award. Both Duty to God and Scouting activities teach us to “be prepared” in “every needful thing.”⁶ The Duty to God Award and the Eagle Scout Award (or a similar award) are complementary, not competitive.

The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve love you and desire to strengthen you in these increasingly difficult times. With this love and desire, they have provided for you a revised *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet, as well as additional materials for Young Men, Young Women, parents, and leaders.

Developing important characteristics

As you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood strive to achieve the Duty to God Award even as the Young Women work on their Personal Progress efforts, you will join with them in standing as witnesses of God as well. This witness is expressed by what you say and also by how you live and keep the commandments.

You know that receiving the Duty to God Award is not the ultimate goal in itself, but rather the incorporation into your lives of attributes that will help you focus more clearly on your duty to God. These characteristics will keep you on track to be worthy and able to meet the sacred tasks and opportunities before you. They will help you to be happy, clean, and strong now and also to prepare for eternally important events such as receiving the blessings of the holy temple, serving missions, and ultimately being sealed to a worthy companion in the house of the Lord.

Alma, as he taught in the land of Gideon, made this clear in timeless language: “And now my beloved brethren, I have said these things unto you that I might awaken you to a sense of your duty to God, that ye may walk blameless before him, that ye may walk after the holy order of God, after which ye have been received.”⁷

You who have received the priesthood will wish to walk after this “holy order” to which you have been called and ordained. You recognize that with every promised blessing there are associated responsibilities. By fulfilling these responsibilities, you are given opportunities to serve others and develop yourself spiritually. These are essential steps in your progress to become more like Jesus.

Jesus’ example in doing His duty to God

The Savior, who suffered all things for us,⁸ faced challenges similar to some we face in our Aaronic Priesthood years.

You remember Jesus' experience at about the age when most of us become deacons. He had gone with His family and others to the temple. When it came time to return home, He was not with Mary and Joseph. They must have assumed that Jesus was with other trusted friends or extended family members. Only when His absence persisted did they become alarmed. As dutiful parents, Mary and Joseph did what your parents may have done in similar circumstances: they went looking for Him. When they located Jesus in the temple, only parents and grandparents might fully appreciate the mixed sense of relief they felt that He was safe, but they also were perhaps a little surprised by His reaction. Have any of you ever had a similar experience? We all know the dialogue that ensued:

"And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

"And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"⁹

Jesus might have said, "Don't you know that I am doing my duty to God?"

We are the Lord's agents, on His errand

President Harold B. Lee taught that the meaning of Jesus' question is found in section 64 of the Doctrine and Covenants.¹⁰ Said President Lee:

"When one becomes a holder of the priesthood, he becomes an agent of the Lord. He should think of his calling as though he were on the Lord's errand. That is what it means to magnify the priesthood. Think of the Master asking each of you, as this young boy did of Joseph and Mary, Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? Whatever you do according to the will of the Lord is the Lord's business."¹¹

Thus, holding the priesthood and doing your duty to God is not only a very serious responsibility but also a remarkable privilege.

Sometimes you might feel that your parents and leaders respond like Mary and Joseph did. After Jesus answered by asking His important question about His Father's business, Luke records, "They understood not the saying which he spake unto them."¹²

Nevertheless, please pay close attention to what Jesus did! It is an example for what we must do if we are really to fulfill our duty to God. "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them. . . . And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."¹³

You must remember that your duty to God is very clearly linked to your duties to your own family members, particularly your parents. It is in being properly subject or submissive not only to God, but also to parents and priesthood leaders, that we can truly fulfill our duty to God. May we all be as Samuel, who said to the Lord, "Speak; for thy servant heareth."¹⁴ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See 1 Samuel 3:4–8.
2. 1 Samuel 3:7.
3. 1 Samuel 3:10.
4. 1 Samuel 3:19.
5. "A Prophet's Counsel and Prayer for Youth," *New Era*, Jan. 2001, 4, 6; or *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 2.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 88:119.
7. Alma 7:22.
8. See Alma 7:11; Doctrine and Covenants 18:11.
9. Luke 2:48–49.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 64:29.
11. Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1974), 255.
12. Luke 2:50.
13. Luke 2:51–52.
14. 1 Samuel 3:10.

Elder Steven E. Snow

Ignoring the beauty in our own backyard

Growing up in southern Utah, some of us sought employment at the many gasoline service stations that lined Highway 91 as it made its way through downtown St. George. My younger brother Paul, then 18, worked at Tom's Service, a station located about three blocks from our home.

One summer day a car with New York license plates pulled in the station and asked for a fill-up. (For you brethren under the age of 30, in those days someone actually came out and filled your car with gas, washed your windows, and checked your oil.) While Paul was washing the windshield, the driver asked him how far it was to the Grand Canyon. Paul replied that it was 170 miles.

"I've waited all my life to see the Grand Canyon," the man exclaimed. "What's it like out there?"

"I don't know," Paul answered. "I've never been there."

"You mean to tell me," the man responded, "that you live two and a half hours from one of the seven wonders of the world and you've never been there!"

"That's right," Paul said.

After a moment, the man replied, "Well, I guess I can understand that. My wife and I have lived in Manhattan for over 20 years, and we've never visited the Statue of Liberty."

"I've been there," Paul said.

Isn't it ironic, brethren, that we will often travel many miles to see the wonders of nature or the creations of man, but yet ignore the beauty in our own backyard?

It is human nature, I suppose, to seek elsewhere for our happiness. Pursuit of career goals, wealth, and material rewards can cloud our perspective and often leads to a lack of appreciation for the bounteous blessings of our present circumstances.

"Let thy heart be full of thanks"

It is precarious to dwell on why we have not been given more. It is, however, beneficial and humbling to dwell on why we have been given so much.

An old proverb states, "The greater wealth is contentment with a little."

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul wrote, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Philippians 4:11).

Alma instructed his son Helaman, giving him counsel that all fathers should teach their children: "Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day" (Alma 37:37).

Alma says, "Let thy heart be full of thanks unto God." The Lord desires that we give thanks. In Thessalonians we read, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Express gratitude in all prayers

As holders of the priesthood we should constantly strive to increase our gratitude. Gratitude may be increased by constantly reflecting on our blessings and giving thanks for them in our daily prayers.

President David O. McKay has said: "The young man who closes the door behind him, who draws the curtains, and there in silence pleads with God for help, should first pour out his soul in gratitude for health, for friends, for loved ones, for the gospel, for the manifestations of God's existence. He should first count his many blessings and name them one by one" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1961, 8).

A constant expression of gratitude should be included in all our prayers. Often prayers are given for specific blessings which we, in our incomplete understanding, believe we need. While the Lord does answer prayers according to His will, He certainly must be pleased when we offer humble prayers of gratitude.

Brethren, the next time we pray, instead of presenting the Lord petition after petition for some action in our behalf, give Him thoughtful thanks for all with which He has blessed us.

President Joseph F. Smith has instructed us that "the spirit of gratitude is always pleasant and satisfying because it carries with it a sense of helpfulness to others; it begets love and friendship, and engenders divine influence. Gratitude is said to be the memory of the heart" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 262).

Pioneers' gratitude in spite of difficulty

In October 1879, a group of 237 Latter-day Saints from several small southwestern Utah settlements was called to blaze a new route and colonize what is today known as San Juan County in southeastern Utah. The journey was to have taken six weeks but instead took nearly six months. Their struggles and heroics are well documented, particularly their seemingly impossible task of crossing the Colorado River at a place called Hole-in-the-Rock. Those who have visited this

place marvel that wagons and teams could have been lowered through this narrow crack in the red rock canyon walls to reach the Colorado River far below. Once the Colorado was crossed, however, many other severe tests awaited them on the trail to San Juan County. Tired and worn out, early in April 1880 they faced their final obstacle, Comb Ridge. The Comb is a ridge of solid sandstone forming a steep wall nearly 1,000 feet high.

One hundred and twenty years later, our family climbed Comb Ridge on a bright spring day. The ridge is steep and treacherous. It was difficult to imagine that wagons, teams, men, women, and children could make such an ascent. But beneath our feet were the scars from the wagon wheels, left as evidence of their struggles so long ago. How did they feel after enduring so much? Were they bitter after the many months of toil and privation? Did they criticize their leaders for sending them on such an arduous journey, asking them to give up so much? Our questions were answered as we reached the top of Comb Ridge. There inscribed in the red sandstone so long ago were the words, "We thank Thee, O God."

Brethren, I pray that we might keep our hearts full of thanks and appreciation for what we have and not dwell on what is not ours. As holders of the priesthood, let us adopt an attitude of gratitude in all we do is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Keith K. Hilbig

Your link in the priesthood chain

Within this vast congregation of priesthood bearers assembled here and throughout the world sit several generations—tens of thousands of sons, fathers, grandfathers, even great-grandfathers—all of whom have faith in Christ, seek to keep His commandments, and desire to serve Him.

Some are part of a long tradition of priesthood men stretching back in time. Others are the very first men in their respective families to bear the priesthood of God. But all have the opportunity—and responsibility—either to create or to continue a chain of worthy men who honor the priesthood and render service in the kingdom, thereby linking families to-

gether from generation to generation. It is *your* individual link in that priesthood chain of which I would speak tonight.

In each dispensation faithful men have been given the priesthood to further the Lord's purposes. The scriptures recount the passing of priesthood authority from prophet to prophet, beginning with Adam.

We are figuratively part of that priesthood chain stretching back to the beginnings of the earth. However, each of us is now literally engaged in the critical task of creating our own strong priesthood link so as to be joined with our own forefathers and to our own posterity.

If one fails to obtain or to honor the Melchizedek Priesthood, his link will be missing, and eternal life will be unattainable (see D&C 76:79; 84:41–42)—hence, our great effort as a church to teach the message of the Restoration to all who are willing to listen and to prepare all who are desirous for the blessings of the priesthood and the temple.

Foreordained to hold the priesthood

Our privilege to bear the priesthood of God tonight has its beginnings in our premortal existence. The prophet Alma explained that men ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood on earth have been “called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling” (Alma 13:3).

The Lord has long intended you to be a creator or a continuer of the chain of faithful bearers in your priesthood family. It was your faith and wise exercise of free agency—in the premortal existence and here in mortality—which permitted you to receive the holy calling of the priesthood.

The Prophet Joseph Smith stated in 1844, “Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 365).

Thus, whether as the first in your family or as the fifth generation to hold the priesthood, we have each come to earth with a personal heritage of faithfulness and foreordination. Such knowledge gives us a firm resolve to always honor the priesthood and thereby to create or continue a multigenerational family in the Church and in the celestial kingdom.

Examples of priesthood service

We often define *priesthood* as the power and authority to act in the name of God upon the earth. But service to our Savior, our family, and our fellowman also defines our priesthood. The Savior intends that we exercise our priesthood primarily for the benefit of others. We cannot bless or baptize ourselves or provide the ordinances of the temple to ourselves. Rather, every priesthood bearer must rely upon others to lovingly exercise their priesthood authority and power to help each of us progress spiritually.

I was able to learn the importance of priesthood service not only by observing my grandfather, father, and brother magnify their callings but also from the brethren in my ward who were priesthood models to me.

When I was a newly ordained teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood, my first home teaching companion was Henry Wilkening, a high priest who was nearly 60 years my senior. He was a German immigrant, a shoemaker by trade, small in stature, but an energetic and faithful shepherd to the families assigned to us. I trotted behind him (for he seemed to walk and to climb

stairs much faster than I could) during our monthly visits, which took us into sobering environments new to my sheltered experience. He expected me to present part of each lesson and to make all the appointments, but mostly I listened and watched as he aided brothers and sisters with various spiritual and social, economic and emotional needs previously unknown to me as a 14-year-old.

I began to realize how much good could be done by a single faithful priesthood bearer. I watched Brother Wilkening forging a strong priesthood link for himself through his loving service to those families in need—and to me in my youth.

The many priesthood men I observed while growing up taught me that providing priesthood service to others is not dependent upon a particular title or specific calling or formal position in the kingdom. Rather, the opportunity arises from and is inherent within the fact that one has received the priesthood of God.

President J. Reuben Clark Jr. wisely taught at the April 1951 general conference: "In the service of the Lord, it is not where you serve but how. In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, one takes the place to which one is duly called, which place one neither seeks nor declines" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1951, 154).

Service strengthens priesthood links

When we serve righteously with all our heart, whatever the responsibility apportioned to us, we are strengthening our priesthood link and connecting it ever more securely to those who have preceded and who will follow us.

I bear solemn testimony of the Savior's divinity and atoning sacrifice and of the restoration of His priesthood which we are privileged to bear—and pray that every son and father participating in this meeting will determine this night to serve the Lord by faithfully honoring the priesthood and firmly connecting his personal link to the priesthood chain which will bind him, his forefathers, and his posterity together throughout eternity. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, brethren, for those inspirational messages.

Our next speaker will be President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Following his remarks, we shall all sing "Come, O Thou King of Kings." President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then address us.

President James E. Faust

Be committed to doing the basics

My beloved brethren of the priesthood of God all over the world, I am pleased to be counted as one of you. This evening I would like to challenge the priesthood of the Church to be more committed in doing those things which build faith, character, and spirituality. These are the routine priesthood obligations we should be doing daily, weekly, monthly—year in and year out. The work

of the Church depends upon basics such as paying tithes; taking care of family and priesthood duties; caring for the poor and the needy; having daily prayer, scripture study, and family home evening; home teaching; participation in quorum activity; and attending the temple. If called upon by the President of the Church, we would be ready, able, and willing to do "some great thing," such as working on the Nauvoo temple, but many are not quite so anxious to do some of these basics.

"Some great thing"

We are all familiar with the Old Testament story of Naaman, the captain of the Syrian hosts, who was a leper. A little Israelite servant told Naaman's wife that there was a prophet in Israel who could heal him. Naaman came with his chariot and horses to the house of Elisha, who sent a messenger to instruct Naaman, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean."¹

You younger boys know how it is when you show your hands to your mother: she'll tell you to go and wash! But Naaman was not a young boy. He was the captain of the Syrian hosts, and he was offended by Elisha's instruction to wash in the Jordan. So he "went away in a rage."² One of Naaman's servants with a wise head remonstrated with him and said: "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?"³

Naaman then repented and followed the counsel of the prophet. The leprosy disappeared, and "his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."⁴ "Some great thing" in this instance was extraordinarily simple and easy to do.

Falling away of Oliver Cowdery

We have in the modern history of the Church contrasting examples of men who were highly favored of the Lord. One, Hyrum Smith, remained totally faithful and committed, even to the giving of his life, while the other, Oliver Cowdery, despite having witnessed "some great things" in the history of the Restoration, became blinded by his personal ambition and lost his exalted place in the leadership of the Church.

Oliver Cowdery shared with the Prophet Joseph Smith many of the profound events of the Restoration, such as

their baptism under the authority of John the Baptist, the conferral of the Aaronic Priesthood, the marvelous appearances in the Kirtland Temple, and writing with his own pen "the entire Book of Mormon (save a few pages) as it fell from the lips of the Prophet [Joseph Smith]."⁵ No one except the Prophet Joseph was more honored with the ministering of angels than Oliver Cowdery.

But when the Prophet Joseph fell on hard times, Oliver was critical of him and became estranged from him. Despite the efforts of the Prophet to reach out the hand of fellowship to him, he became hostile to the Prophet and the Church and was excommunicated on April 12, 1838.

Oliver Cowdery's return

A few years after the death of the Prophet, Oliver repented and expressed interest in coming back to the Church. In response, Brigham Young wrote on November 22, 1847, inviting him to "return to our father's house, from whence thou hast wandered, . . . and renew thy testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon."⁶ Oliver appeared before the high priests quorum and said:

"Brethren for a number of years I have been separated from you. I now desire to come back. I wish to come humbly and be one in your midst.—I seek no station. I only wish to be identified with you.—I am out of the church. I am not a member of the church. I wish to become a member of the church again. I wish to come in at the door. I know the door. I have not come here to seek precedence. I come humbly and throw myself upon the decision of this body—knowing as I do that their decisions are right and should be obeyed."⁷

He also bore his testimony in these words: "Friends and brethren my name is Cowdery, Oliver Cowdery. In the early history of this church I stood identified with [you.] I . . . handled with my hands the gold plates from which [the Book of

Mormon] was translated. I also beheld the interpreters. That book is true. Sidney Rigdon did not write it. Mr. Spaulding did not write it. I wrote it myself as it fell from the lips of the prophet."⁸ Even though Oliver came back, he lost his exalted place in the Church.

Hyrum Smith's steadfastness

In contrast, President Heber J. Grant said of Hyrum Smith: "There is no better example of an older brother's love than that exhibited in the life of Hyrum Smith for the Prophet Joseph Smith. . . . They were as united and as affectionate and as loving as mortal men could be. . . . There never was one particle of . . . jealousy in the heart of Hyrum Smith. No mortal man could have been more loyal, more true, more faithful in life or in death than was Hyrum Smith to the Prophet of the living God."⁹

He responded to every need and request from his younger brother Joseph, who led the Church and received the revelations which we have today. Hyrum was steadfast day to day, month by month, year in and year out.

After their brother Alvin's death, Hyrum finished building the white frame home for their parents. After Joseph had received the golden plates, Hyrum provided the wooden box to store and protect them. When the plates had been translated, Joseph entrusted Hyrum with the printer's copy of the manuscript. Hyrum, often accompanied by Oliver Cowdery, carried pages to and from the typesetter daily.¹⁰

Hyrum worked as a farmer and laborer to support his family, but after the Church was organized in 1830 he accepted the call to preside over the Colesville Branch. He took his wife and family and went to live with the Newel Knight family, spending much of his time "preaching the gospel wherever [he] could find any who would listen."¹¹ Ever a good missionary, he not only preached near his home but

also went to the eastern seaboard and southward in the United States. In 1831 he went with John Murdock to Missouri and back, preaching along the way.¹²

When the construction of the Kirtland Temple was envisioned in 1833, Hyrum immediately took his scythe and cleared weeds from the temple site and began digging the foundation. In 1834 when Zion's Camp was organized, Hyrum assisted Lyman Wight in recruiting members of the camp and led a group of Saints from Michigan to Missouri.

Being thus proved in the little things, Hyrum became an Assistant President of the Church in December 1834. He served under the direction of his younger brother, the Prophet Joseph. He was ever a source of strength and comfort to his brother, whether in Church service or in Liberty Jail. As persecutions came and Joseph fled the mob at Nauvoo in 1844, Hyrum went with him. As they stood on the bank of the river, contemplating whether to return, Joseph turned to Hyrum and said, "You are the oldest, what shall we do?"

"Let us go back and give ourselves up and see the thing out,"¹³ Hyrum replied.

They returned to Nauvoo and were taken to Carthage, where they died as martyrs within minutes of one another. Hyrum had been faithful to his trust even to the laying down of his life. In all respects he was a disciple of the Savior. But his day-to-day striving made him truly great. In contrast, Oliver Cowdery was great when handling the plates and being attended to by angels, but when called upon to faithfully endure day-to-day trials and challenges, Oliver faltered and fell away from the Church.

Do small things, not only great ones

We do not prove our love for the Savior only by doing "some great thing." If the prophet personally asked you to go on a mission to some strange and exotic place, would you go? You would probably make every effort to go. But what about

paying tithing? What about doing your home teaching? We show our love for the Savior by doing the many small acts of faith, devotion, and kindness to others that define our character. This was well demonstrated by the life of Dr. George R. Hill III, former General Authority, who died a few months ago.

Elder Hill was a world authority on coal and a renowned scientist. He received multiple awards and honors for his scientific achievements. He was dean of the College of Mines and Mineral Resources and Envirotech professor of engineering at the University of Utah. But as a person, Elder Hill was humble, self-effacing, and totally dedicated. He served as the bishop of three different wards and as a regional representative before being called as a General Authority. After his release as a General Authority, he became a counselor in a ward bishopric. His last callings, at a time when he was in failing health, were as stake cannery director and member of a ward choir. He filled these last callings with the same commitment as he had all the others. He did whatever he was called upon to do—it did not have to be “some great thing.”

As a friend of mine once said: “When we sacrifice our talents or our earthly or academic honors or our increasingly limited time on the altar to God, the act of sacrifice binds our hearts to Him, and we feel our love for Him increase. When we render any service in the kingdom—be it teaching a . . . lesson or dry pack canning at Welfare Square—it will be of much less value to us if we only see it as a ‘To Do’ item. . . . But if we visualize ourselves laying on the altar to God our talents or our time commitment, such as in attending an inconvenient church meeting, then our sacrifice becomes personal and devotional to Him.”¹⁴

“I wasn’t there for the weeds”

A story shared by our beloved associate Elder Henry B. Eyring illustrates

this principle of commitment still further. This story is about his father, the great scientist Henry Eyring, who served on the Bonneville Stake high council. He was responsible for the welfare farm, which included a field of onions that needed to be weeded. At that time he was nearly 80 and suffering from painful bone cancer. He assigned himself to do weeding even though the pain was so great that he pulled himself along on his stomach with his elbows. The pain was too great for him to kneel. Yet he smiled, laughed, and talked happily with the others who were there that day weeding that field of onions. I now quote what Elder Eyring said of this incident:

“After all the work was finished and the onions were all weeded, someone [said to] him, ‘Henry, good heavens! You didn’t pull *those* weeds, did you? Those weeds were sprayed two days ago, and they were going to die anyway.’

“Dad just roared. He thought that was the funniest thing. He thought it was a great joke on himself. He had worked through the day in the wrong weeds. They had been sprayed and would have died anyway.

“. . . I [asked] him, ‘Dad, how could you make a joke out of that?’ . . .

“He said something to me that I will never forget. . . . He said, ‘Hal, I wasn’t there for the weeds.’”¹⁵

Be faithful in doing ordinary things

Small things can have great potential. Television, which is a great blessing to mankind, was conceived by a teenager in Idaho as he was plowing straight furrows in his father’s field with a disc harrow. He envisioned that he could transmit straight lines from one image dissector to be reproduced in another.¹⁶ Often we cannot see the potential in doing seemingly small things. This 14-year-old boy was doing ordinary day-to-day work when this extraordinary idea came to him. As Nephi once commented, “And thus we see that by

small means the Lord can bring about great things.”¹⁷

You young men are a chosen generation for whom the future holds great promise. The future may require you to compete with young men in a worldwide market. You need special training. You may be selected for training not because of some extraordinary achievement or great thing, but because you got your Eagle Scout Award, your Duty to God Award, graduated from seminary, or served a mission.

In the parable of talents, the one who had increased his talents was told, “Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”¹⁸ May we all be faithful in doing the day-to-day, ordinary things that prove our worthiness, for they will lead us to and qualify us for great things. I bear witness of this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 2 Kings 5:10.
2. 2 Kings 5:12.
3. 2 Kings 5:13.
4. 2 Kings 5:14.
5. Reuben Miller, journal, 1848–1849, Family and Church History Department Archives, 21 Oct. 1848; punctuation and spelling modernized.

6. Letter from Brigham Young to Oliver Cowdery, 22 Nov. 1847, cited by Susan Easton Black in *Who's Who in the Doctrine and Covenants* (1997), 76.
7. Miller, journal, Nov. 1848.
8. Miller, journal, 21 Oct. 1848.
9. Heber J. Grant, “Hyrum Smith and His Distinguished Posterity,” *Improvement Era*, Aug. 1918, 854–55.
10. See Ronald K. Esplin, “Hyrum Smith: The Mildness of a Lamb, the Integrity of Job,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2000, 32.
11. “Newel Knight’s Journal,” from “Scraps of Biography” in *Classic Experiences and Adventures* (1969), 65.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 52:8–10.
13. See Pearson H. Corbett, *Hyrum Smith—Patriarch* (1963), 387.
14. James S. Jardine, “Consecration and Learning,” in Henry B. Eyring, ed., *On Becoming a Disciple-Scholar* (1995), 79–80.
15. See Elder Henry B. Eyring, “Waiting upon the Lord,” *Brigham Young University 1990–91 Devotional and Fireside Speeches*, 22.
16. Richard Folkers, “Philo Farnsworth: ‘Dr. X’s’ Instant Images,” *U.S. News and World Report*, 17 Aug. 1998, 44.
17. 1 Nephi 16:29.
18. Matthew 25:23.

The choir and congregation sang
“Come, O Thou King of Kings.”

President Thomas S. Monson

“Let every man learn his duty”

My dear brethren, it is an awesome responsibility, and yet a precious privilege, to respond to the assignment to speak to you this evening. The excitement, the anticipation of general conference, including the general priesthood meeting—whether in person or by satellite or television—brings joy to our hearts.

The Lord has made it clear what our responsibilities are and has given to us in

the 107th section of the Doctrine and Covenants a solemn charge: “Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.”¹

A challenging conference assignment

At times the performance of duty, the response to a divine call, or the reaction to a spiritual prompting is not overwhelming. On occasion, however, the duty to

respond is downright overpowering. I experienced such a situation prior to the general conference of April 1966. That's 35 years ago, but I remember it vividly.

I had received my assignment to speak at one of the conference sessions and had prepared and committed to memory a message entitled "Meeting Your Goliath." This was based on the account of the famous battle waged by David and Goliath of olden times.

Then I received a telephone call from President David O. McKay. The conversation went about like this: "Brother Monson, this is President McKay calling. How are you?"

I took a deep breath and answered, "Oh, I'm fine, President, and looking forward to conference."

"That's why I'm calling, Brother Monson. The Saturday morning session will be rebroadcast on Sunday as our Easter message to the world. I will be speaking to an Easter theme and would like you to join me and speak during that important session to that type of theme."

"Of course, President. I will be happy to do so."

That's when the extent of this brief conversation really dawned on me. All of a sudden "Meeting Your Goliath" didn't quite measure up to an Easter message. I knew I must begin to prepare all over again. There was so little time. Indeed, my "Goliath" stood before me.

That night I cleared the kitchen table and placed my typewriter on the tabletop along with a ream of bond paper, with a trusty wastepaper basket by my side to hold all the false starts that accompany such an assignment of preparation. I began at about 7:00 P.M. and had not written a satisfactory line by 1:00 A.M. The wastebasket was filled, but my mind certainly was not. What was I to do? The clock was running—indeed, it was racing. I paused to pray.

Soon thereafter there came to my mind the sadness of my neighbors Mark

and Wilma Shumway in the recent loss of their youngest child. I thought to myself, "Perhaps I could speak directly to them and peripherally to all others, for who hasn't lost a dear one and had occasion to grieve?" My fingers raced over the typewriter keyboard but could barely keep up with my thoughts.

As the first dim light of morning peered through our kitchen window, I had finished the message. The task remained to learn it and then deliver it to the world. Rarely have I struggled so hard to fill a prophetic assignment. However, Heavenly Father had heard my prayer. I shall never forget the experience.

Two landmark passages of scripture filled my soul as the conference session concluded. They are both familiar to you, brethren. They have no expiration date attached to them. First, from Nephi of old: "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them."²

Second is the promise of the Lord Himself to you and to me from the Doctrine and Covenants: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."³

Our duty to save souls

Many of us assembled tonight hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, while others bear the Aaronic Priesthood. All of us have a solemn duty to honor the priesthood and labor to bring many precious souls unto the Lord. We remember His declaration: "The worth of souls is great in the sight of God."⁴ Are we doing all we should? Do we remember the words of President John Taylor: "If you do not magnify your callings, God will hold you responsible for those whom you might have saved had you done your duty."⁵

Bishop Warner goes to the rescue

The desire to help another, the quest for the lost sheep, may not always yield success at once. On occasion, progress is slow—even indiscernible. Such was the experience of my longtime friend Gill Warner. He was a newly called bishop when Douglas, a member of his ward serving in the mission field, transgressed and was deprived of his Church membership. Father was saddened; Mother was totally devastated. Douglas soon thereafter moved from the state. The years hurried by, but Bishop Warner, now a member of a high council, never ceased to wonder what had become of Douglas.

In 1975 I attended the stake conference of Brother Warner's stake and held a priesthood leadership meeting early on Sunday morning. I spoke of the Church discipline system and the need to labor earnestly and lovingly to rescue any who had strayed. Gill Warner raised his hand and outlined the story of Douglas. He concluded by posing a question to me: "Do I have any responsibility to work with Douglas to help bring him back to Church membership?"

Gill reminded me later that my response to his question was direct and given without hesitation. I said, "As his former bishop and one who knew and loved him, I would think you would wish to do all you could to bring him back."

Unbeknownst to Gill Warner, Douglas's mother had, the previous week, fasted and prayed that a man would be raised up to help save her son. Gill discovered this when, following the meeting, he felt prompted to call her to report his determination to be of help.

Gill began his odyssey of redemption. Douglas was contacted by him. Old times, happy times, were remembered. Testimony was expressed, love was conveyed, and confidence instilled. The pace was excruciatingly slow. Discouragement frequently entered the scene; but step-by-

step Douglas made headway. At long last prayers were answered, efforts rewarded, and victory attained. Douglas was approved for baptism.

The baptismal date was set, family members gathered, and former bishop Gill Warner flew to the city where Douglas lived and performed the ordinance.

Bishop Warner, through the love of his heart and with a sense of responsibility to a former priest in the Aaronic Priesthood—even the quorum over which he presided—went to the rescue, that not one would be lost.

Other faithful bishops

There may be others, but I have personally known three bishops who, when they presided over their wards, there were in the priests quorum 48 or more young men, or in other words, a full scripturally defined quorum of priests. These three bishops were Alvin R. Dyer, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Alfred B. Smith. Were they overwhelmed by their task? Not at all. Through their diligent efforts and with the help of caring parents and the blessings of the Lord, these bishops guided each member of their respective priests quorum—almost without exception—to the ordination of elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood, service in the mission field, and marriage in the temple of the Lord. While Brother Dyer and Brother Smith have gone to their eternal reward, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, is present with us tonight. Elder Wirthlin, your service and leadership with these young men, now grown older, will never be forgotten.

"Be ready always"

As a 12-year-old boy I had the privilege to serve as the secretary of my deacons quorum. I recall with joy the many assignments we members of that quorum had the opportunity to fill. Passing the sa-

cred sacrament, collecting the monthly fast offerings, and looking after one another come readily to mind. The most frightening one, however, happened at the leadership session of our ward conference. The member of our stake presidency presiding was William F. Perschon. He called on a number of the ward officers to speak. Then, without the slightest warning, President Perschon stood and said, "We will now hear from Thomas S. Monson, secretary of the deacons quorum, to give us an accounting of his service and bear his testimony." I don't recall a thing I said, but I have never forgotten the experience.

Brethren, remember the Apostle Peter's admonition, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you."⁶

Encouraging Fritz Hoerold, the sailor

During World War II, as a teenager I was privileged to serve as president of the teachers quorum. I was asked to learn and then apply the counsel from the Doctrine and Covenants, section 107, verse 86: "The duty of the president over the office of the teachers is to preside over . . . the teachers, and to sit in council with them, teaching them the duties of their office, as given in the covenants." I tried my best to live up to this defined duty.

In that quorum was a young man, Fritz Hoerold. He was short in stature but tall on courage. Soon after Fritz turned 17, he enlisted in the United States Navy and was off to training. He then found himself on a large battleship in a number of those bloody engagements in the Pacific. His ship was severely damaged, and many sailors were killed or wounded.

Fritz returned home on leave following such an engagement and came back to our teachers quorum. The quorum adviser invited him to speak to us. My, he looked resplendent in his Navy blues with appropriate war ribbons attached. I re-

member that I asked Fritz to tell us any thoughts he had for our benefit. After all, we were about the same age. With a wry smile he responded, "Don't volunteer for anything!"

I didn't see Fritz again from that time when we were 17 until, a few years ago, I read a magazine article concerning those same battles at sea. I wondered if Fritz Hoerold were even still alive and, if so, if he lived somewhere in Salt Lake City. Through a telephone call I found him and sent the magazine to him. He and his wife expressed their thanks. Having learned that Fritz had not as yet been ordained an elder and hence had never been to the temple, I wrote a letter encouraging him to qualify for the blessings of the temple. On two occasions we happened to see one another at restaurants. His dear wife, Joyce, always urged me, "Keep working with this man of mine." His daughters voiced their approval of their mother's urging. I kept up my encouragement.

Just a few weeks ago I saw in the newspaper obituary columns that Joyce, Fritz's wife, had passed away. How I wished that I had been more successful with my private project to get Fritz to the temple. I noted the time and place of Sister Hoerold's funeral service, rescheduled other appointments, and went to the service. Immediately upon seeing me, Fritz made a beeline to my side. We both shed a few tears. He asked me to be the final speaker.

When I arose to speak, I looked at Fritz and his family and said, "Fritz, I am here today as the president of the teachers quorum of which you and I were once members." I proffered how he and his family could become a "forever family" through temple ordinances—ordinances at which I pledged to officiate when that time came.

I concluded my remarks, choking back the tears of emotion, by saying to Fritz in the hearing and view of his family and all in attendance, "Fritz, my dear

friend and fellow sailor, you have courage; you have determination. You put your life on the line for your country in a time of peril. Now, Fritz, you must heed the call of the bos'n's whistle: 'All aboard—anchor's aweigh'—for your journey to exaltation. Joyce is there waiting for you. I know your dear children and grandchildren are praying for you. Fritz, as your teachers quorum president of long ago, I will strive with all my heart and soul to make certain you don't miss the ship that will carry you and your loved ones to celestial glory."

I gave to him a Navy salute. Fritz stood and returned the salute.

Brethren, may each of us be obedient to the easily remembered couplet "Do your duty, that is best. Leave unto the Lord the rest." For this I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Be worthy of the priesthood you hold

Now, my dear brethren, as I face this great body of men in this hall and realize there are tens of thousands more scattered across the world, all of one mind and of one heart and all carrying the authority of the priesthood of the Living God, I am subdued and humbled. I seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

This body is unique in all the world. There is nothing else like it. You comprise the legions of the Lord, men ready to do battle with the adversary of truth, men willing to stand up and be counted, men who carry testimonies of the truth, men who have sacrificed and given much for this great cause. May the Lord bless you and sustain you and magnify you. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9).

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99.
2. 1 Nephi 3:7.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
5. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, 6 Aug. 1878, 1.
6. 1 Peter 3:15.

President Hinckley

We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be tomorrow from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

We express our gratitude to this wonderful choir for the beautiful music they have provided.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing "Lord, I Would Follow Thee." The benediction will then be given by Elder Richard B. Wirthlin, who was released this afternoon as a member of the Seventy.

Brethren, let us be worthy of the priesthood which we hold. Let us live nearer to the Lord. Let us be good husbands and fathers.

Any man who is a tyrant in his own home is unworthy of the priesthood. He cannot be a fit instrument in the hands of the Lord when he does not show respect and kindness and love toward the companion of his choice.

Likewise, any man who is a bad example for his children, who cannot control his temper, or who is involved in dishonest or immoral practices will find the power of his priesthood nullified.

I remind you "that the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.

"That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man" (D&C 121:36-37).

Brethren, let us be good men as those favored of the Lord with a bestowal of His divine power upon us.

Need for the Perpetual Education Fund

Now, to a different but related matter. Last April in our priesthood meeting, I announced a new program. I spoke of the large numbers of our missionaries from South America, Mexico, the Philippines, and other areas. They respond to calls and serve with their North American brothers and sisters. They develop strong testimonies. They learn a new way of life. They are highly effective because they speak their native tongues and know the cultures of their native lands. They enjoy a wonderful season of hard and dedicated work.

Then they are released to go back home. Their families are living in poverty, and many of them fall back into the same situation from which they came, unable to move because of a lack of skills and the consequent difficulty in finding good employment.

I spoke to you of the Perpetual Emigration Fund, which was established in the pioneer era of the Church to assist the poor in coming from England and Europe. A revolving fund was established from which small loans were made, which made it possible for 30,000 to emigrate from their native lands and gather in Zion.

I told you we would apply the same principle and create what would be known as the Perpetual Education Fund. Out of

the funds which would be donated by our people, and not from tithing funds, we would create a corpus, the earnings from which would be used to assist our young brethren and sisters in attending school to qualify themselves for better employment. They would develop skills whereby they could earn sufficient to take good care of their families and rise above the poverty level that they and their prior generations had known.

Progress of the Perpetual Education Fund

We had nothing in the fund at the time it was planned. But moving forward in faith, we established an organization, modest in its dimensions, to implement that which we felt was necessary. I am pleased to report that the money has come in, tens of thousands of dollars, hundreds of thousands of dollars, even millions. This has come from generous members of the Church who love the Lord and wish to assist the less fortunate of His people in rising in the economic world. We now have a substantial sum. It is not all that we need. We hope that these contributions will continue. The size of the corpus will determine the number who can be helped.

Now, six months later, I wish to give you a report of what has been accomplished. First, we called Elder John K. Carmack, who served so well in the First Quorum of the Seventy and who became an emeritus Seventy with this conference. He is an accomplished attorney, a man of sound judgment in business, a man of great ability. He has been appointed managing director, and though he is retired from the work of the Seventy, he will give his full time to the prosecution of this endeavor.

Elder Richard E. Cook of the Seventy, who likewise has become emeritus, will join him in looking after the finances. Elder Cook was formerly assistant controller of the Ford Motor Company, a man experienced in worldwide finance, a most

capable executive, and a man who loves the Lord and the Lord's children.

We have worn out these brethren on one side, and now have turned them over to wear them out on the other side.

They have associated with them Brother Rex Allen, an expert in organization and training, and Brother Chad Evans, who has vast experience in programs of advanced education.

All contribute their time and expertise without compensation.

The program is up and running. These brethren have been very careful to get it off to a proper start with sound governing principles. We have restricted the area in which it will operate initially, but this area will be expanded as we have the means to do so.

These brethren have gone to work to utilize the existing organization of the Church. The program is priesthood based, and that is why it will succeed. It begins with the bishops and the stake presidents. It involves the Church Educational System, the Employment Services offices, and others who work together in a marvelous spirit of cooperation.

Examples of how the program is helping

The program was first implemented in Peru, Chile, and Mexico—areas where the number of returned missionaries is large and the need is great. The local leaders have been enthusiastic and committed. The beneficiaries are learning true principles of self-reliance. Their vision of their potential is greatly broadened. They are selecting good local schools for training and are using, to the extent possible, their personal, family, and other local resources. They are appreciative and willing and deeply grateful for the opportunity afforded them. Let me give you two or three vignettes.

The first is that of a young man who served in the Bolivia Cochabamba Mission. He lives with his faithful mother and

nieces in a poor neighborhood. Their little home has a concrete floor and one light-bulb; the roof leaks, and the window is broken. He was a successful missionary. He says:

"My mission was the best thing that I have been able to do in my life. I learned to be obedient to the commandments and to be patient in my afflictions. I also learned some English and to manage my money, my time, and my skills better.

"Then, when I finished my mission, going home was difficult. My American companions went back to a university. But there is a lot of poverty in our country. It is very difficult to get an education. My mother does her best, but she can't help us. She has suffered so much, and I am her hope.

"When I learned of the Perpetual Education Fund, I felt so happy. The prophet recognized our efforts. I was filled with joy. . . . There was a possibility I could study, become self-reliant, have a family, help my mother.

"I will study accounting at a local school where I can study and work. It is a short course, just three years long. I have to keep working as a janitor, but that is OK. Once I graduate and get a job in accounting, I will work toward higher education in international business.

"This is our opportunity, and we cannot fail. The Lord trusts us. I have read many times in the Book of Mormon the words the Lord told the prophets, that as we keep the commandments, we would prosper in the land. This is being fulfilled. I am so grateful to God for this great opportunity to receive what my brothers and sisters did not have, to help my family, to accomplish my goals. And I am excited to repay the loan to see others be so blessed. I know the Lord will bless me as I do it."

Now, isn't that wonderful? Now another. A young man in Mexico City was approved to receive a loan of approximately \$1,000 to make it possible for him to attend school to become a diesel me-

chanic. He has said: "My promise is to give my best in order to feel satisfied with my efforts. I know this program is valuable and important. Because of this, I am trying to take maximum advantage of this for the future. I will be able to serve and help the poor and help counsel my family members. I thank my Father in Heaven for this beautiful and inspired program."

A loan was recently approved for another young man from Mexico City, who served in the Nevada Las Vegas Mission. He desires to become a dental technician. His training will require 15 months of dedicated work. He says, "My promise upon finishing my studies at the technical school with the help of the Perpetual Education Fund is to repay the loan so that other returned missionaries can enjoy these blessings."

And so we have begun this work of making it possible for our faithful and able young men and women to climb the ladder which will assure them of economic success. With greatly improved opportunities, they will step out of the cycle of poverty which they and those before them have known for so long. They have served missions, and they will continue to serve in the Church. They will become leaders in this great work in their native lands. They will pay their tithes and offerings, which will make it possible for the Church to expand its work across the world.

Anticipated growth of the program

We anticipate that by the end of this year we will have about 1,200 in the program. Three years from now, we estimate there will be more than 3,000. The opportunities are there. The need is urgent. We may fail in a few cases. But the vast majority will perform as we expect, both young men and young women.

Our only limitation will be the amount we have in the fund. We again invite all

who wish to participate to make a contribution, large or small. We can then extend this great work which will make it possible for those of faith and latent ability to rise to economic independence as faithful members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

An example to show the tremendous need

Can you grasp the meaning of the tremendous work of this Church? Let me paint you a scenario. A pair of missionaries knock on the door of a little home somewhere in Peru. A woman answers. She does not quite understand what the missionaries want. But she invites them in. They arrange to come when her husband and other members of the family are there.

The missionaries teach them. Touched by the power of the Spirit, they respond to the message of eternal truth. They are baptized.

The family is active in the Church. They pay an honest but very meager tithing. They have a son or daughter in that family who is in his or her late teens. At the right time, the son or the daughter is called to serve a mission. The family does all it can to support him or her, and the remainder is made up from the missionary fund, which comes of the contributions of the Saints.

The son or daughter works with a companion from the United States or Canada. He or she learns English, while the companion's Spanish is greatly improved. They work together with love and appreciation and respect, one for another, representatives of two great divergent cultures.

Upon completion of their missions, the North American returns home and goes back to school. The Peruvian returns home and is hopeful only of finding work of a menial nature. The pay is ever so small. The future is dismal. He or she does

not have the needed skills to rise above such employment. And then comes this bright ray of hope. Well, brethren, you know the picture. I need not labor it further. The way before us is clear, the need is tremendous, and the Lord has pointed the way.

A fund to help aspiring teachers

Elder Carmack recently came across an old account book. He brought it to me. We discovered that way back in 1903, a small fund was established to help aspiring schoolteachers qualify for greater opportunities through small loans to assist them while going to school.

It was continued for 30 years until it was finally dropped during the Depression.

I was amazed at the names contained in that old ledger book. Two became university presidents. Others became well-known and highly qualified educators. The ledger shows repayments of \$10.00, of \$25.00, of \$3.10 interest, and such things. One of the beneficiaries of that program became a bishop, then a stake president, then an Apostle, and eventually a counselor in the First Presidency.

Reach down to lift another

Brethren, we need to care for one another more diligently. We need to make a little more effort to assist those who are down at the bottom of the ladder. We need to give encouragement and a lifting hand to men and women of faith and integrity and ability, who can climb that ladder with a little help.

That principle applies not only with reference to our present undertaking in this fund, but in a more general way. Let us open our hearts; let us reach down and lift up; let us open our purses; let us show a greater love for our fellowmen.

The Lord has blessed us so abundantly. And the needs are so great. He has said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

I read from the book of Acts:

"And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

"Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms.

"And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.

"And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

"Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

"And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

"And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God" (Acts 3:2-8).

Now note that Peter took him by the right hand and lifted him up.

Peter had to reach down to lift the lame man. We must also reach down.

God bless you, my dear brethren, young and old. Keep the faith. Minister with love. Rear your families in the way of the Lord. "Look to God and live" (Alma 37:47).

I so pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Lord, I Would Follow Thee."

Elder Richard B. Wirthlin offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 7, 2001. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist. The choir sang "The Morning Breaks" to begin the session. President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the fourth general session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "The Morning Breaks, the Shadows Flee" and will now favor us with "Cast Thy Burden upon the Lord." Following the choir, the invocation will be offered by Elder William R. Bradford of the Seventy.

After the invocation, the choir will sing "If You Could Hie to Kolob." President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then be our first speaker. He will be followed by President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and he will be followed by Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church.

The choir sang "Cast Thy Burden upon the Lord."

Elder William R. Bradford offered the invocation.

The choir sang "If You Could Hie to Kolob."

President Thomas S. Monson

As I stand before you this morning, my thoughts return to the time of my youth when in Sunday School we often sang the lovely hymn:

Welcome, welcome, Sabbath morning;
Now we rest from ev'ry care.
Welcome, welcome is thy dawning,
Holy Sabbath, day of prayer.¹

This Sabbath day I pray for an interest in your faith and prayers as I respond to the invitation to address you.

Responses to events of September 11

All of us have been dramatically affected by the tragic events of that fateful day, September 11, 2001. Suddenly, without warning, devastating destruction left death in its wake and snuffed out the lives of enormous numbers of men, women, and children. Evaporated were well-laid plans for pleasant futures. Substituted therefor were tears of sorrow and cries of pain from wounded souls.

Countless are the reports we have heard during the past three and a half weeks of those who were touched in some way—either directly or indirectly—by the events of that day. I should like to share with you the comments of a Church member, Rebecca Sindar, who was on a flight from Salt Lake City to Dallas on the morning of Tuesday, September 11. The flight was interrupted, as were all flights in the air at the time of the tragedies, and the plane grounded in Amarillo, Texas. Sister Sindar reports:

“We all left the plane and found televisions in the airport, where we crowded around to see the broadcast of what had happened. People were lined up to call loved ones to assure them we were safely on the ground. I shall always remember the 12 or so missionaries who were on their way to the mission field on our flight. They made phone calls, and then we saw them huddled in a circle in a corner of the airport, kneeling in prayer together. How I wish I could have captured that moment to share with the mothers and fathers of those sweet young men as they saw the need for prayer right away.”

Dispelling the darkness of death

My brothers and sisters, death eventually comes to all mankind. It comes to the aged as they walk on faltering feet. Its summons is heard by those who have scarcely reached midway in life's journey, and often it hushes the laughter of little children. Death is one fact that no one can escape or deny.

Frequently death comes as an intruder. It is an enemy that suddenly appears in the midst of life's feast, putting out its lights and gaiety. Death lays its heavy hand upon those dear to us and at times leaves us baffled and wondering. In certain situations, as in great suffering and illness, death comes as an angel of mercy. But for the most part, we think of it as the enemy of human happiness.

The darkness of death can ever be dispelled by the light of revealed truth. “I am the resurrection, and the life,” spoke the Master. “He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”²

This reassurance—yes, even holy confirmation—of life beyond the grave could well provide the peace promised by the Savior when He assured His disciples: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”³

Out of the darkness and the horror of Calvary came the voice of the Lamb, saying, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”⁴ And the dark was no longer dark, for He was with His Father. He had come from God, and to Him He had returned. So also those who walk with God in this earthly pilgrimage know from blessed experience that He will not abandon His children who trust in Him. In the night of death, His presence will be “better than [a] light and safer than a known way.”⁵

Testimonies of the Savior's Resurrection

Saul, on the road to Damascus, had a vision of the risen, exalted Christ. Later, as Paul, defender of truth and fearless missionary in the service of the Master, he bore witness of the risen Lord as he declared to the Saints at Corinth:

“Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

“... He was buried, and ... he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

“... He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

“After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once. . . .

“After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

“And last of all he was seen of me.”⁶

In our dispensation this same testimony was spoken boldly by the Prophet Joseph Smith, as he and Sidney Rigdon testified:

"And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

"For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

"That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God."⁷

This is the knowledge that sustains. This is the truth that comforts. This is the assurance that guides those bowed down with grief out of the shadows and into the light. It is available to all.

What are we doing with today?

How fragile life; how certain death. We do not know when we will be required to leave this mortal existence. And so I ask, "What are we doing with today?" If we live only for tomorrow, we'll have a lot of empty yesterdays today. Have we been guilty of declaring, "I've been thinking about making some course corrections in my life. I plan to take the first step—tomorrow"? With such thinking, tomorrow is forever. Such tomorrows rarely come unless we do something about them today. As the familiar hymn teaches:

There are chances for work all around
just now,

Opportunities right in our way.

Do not let them pass by, saying, "Some-
time I'll try,"

But go and do something today.⁸

Let us ask ourselves the questions: "Have I done any good in the world today? Have I helped anyone in need?"⁹ What a formula for happiness! What a prescription for contentment, for inner

peace—to have inspired gratitude in another human being.

Our opportunities to give of ourselves are indeed limitless, but they are also perishable. There are hearts to gladden. There are kind words to say. There are gifts to be given. There are deeds to be done. There are souls to be saved.

Jacob Marley regrets lost opportunities

As we remember that "when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God,"¹⁰ we will not find ourselves in the unenviable position of Jacob Marley's ghost, who spoke to Ebenezer Scrooge in Dickens' immortal *A Christmas Carol*. Marley spoke sadly of opportunities lost. Said he: "Not to know that any Christian spirit working kindly in its little sphere, whatever it may be, will find its mortal life too short for its vast means of usefulness. Not to know that no space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunities misused! Yet such was I. Oh! such was I!"

Marley added: "Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed Star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode? Were there no poor homes to which its light would have conducted me!"

Fortunately, as we know, Ebenezer Scrooge changed his life for the better. I love his line, "I am not the man I was."¹¹

Why is the story *A Christmas Carol* so popular? Why is it ever new? I personally feel it is inspired of God. It brings out the best within human nature. It gives hope. It motivates change. We can turn from the paths which would lead us down and, with a song in our hearts, follow a star and walk toward the light. We can quicken our step, bolster our courage, and bask in the sunlight of truth. We can hear more clearly the laughter of little children. We can dry the tear of the weeping. We can comfort the dying by sharing the promise

of eternal life. If we lift one weary hand which hangs down, if we bring peace to one struggling soul, if we give as did the Master, we can—by showing the way—become a guiding star for some lost mariner.

Because life is fragile and death inevitable, we must make the most of each day.

A grandma regrets “war” with neighbor

There are many ways in which we can misuse our opportunities. Some time ago I read a tender story written by Louise Dickinson Rich which vividly illustrates this truth. She wrote:

“My grandmother had an enemy named Mrs. Wilcox. Grandma and Mrs. Wilcox moved, as brides, into next-door houses on . . . Main Street of the tiny town in which they were to live out their lives. I don’t know what started the war [between them]—and I don’t think that by the time I came along, over 30 years later, they remembered themselves what started it. . . .

“ . . . This was no polite sparring match. This was . . . total war. Nothing in town escaped repercussion. The 300-year-old church, which had lived through the Revolution, the Civil War, and the Spanish-American War, almost went down when Grandma and Mrs. Wilcox fought the Battle of the Ladies’ Aid. Grandma won that engagement, but it was a hollow victory. Mrs. Wilcox, since she couldn’t be president, resigned . . . in a huff. . . . What’s the fun of running a thing if you can’t force your . . . enemy to ‘eat crow’?

Mrs. Wilcox won the Battle of the Public Library, getting her niece Gertrude appointed librarian instead of my Aunt Phyllis. The day Gertrude took over was the day Grandma stopped reading library books. [They became] ‘filthy gemy things’ . . . overnight.

“The Battle of the High School was a draw. The principal got a better job and left before Mrs. Wilcox succeeded in hav-

ing him ousted, or Grandma in having him given life tenure in office.

“ . . . When, as children, we visited my grandmother, part of the fun was making faces at Mrs. Wilcox’s . . . grandchildren. . . . One banner day, we put a snake into the Wilcox rain barrel. My grandmother made token protests, but we sensed tacit sympathy. . . .

“Don’t think for a minute that this was a one-sided campaign. Mrs. Wilcox had grandchildren, too. . . . Grandma didn’t get off scot free. . . . Never a windy wash-day went by [that the clothesline didn’t mysteriously break, with the clothes falling in the dirt].

“I don’t know how Grandma could have borne her troubles so long if it hadn’t been for the household page of her daily Boston newspaper. This household page was a wonderful institution. Besides the usual cooking hints and cleaning advice, it had a department composed of letters from readers to each other. The idea was that if you had a problem—or even only some steam to blow off—you wrote a letter to the paper, signing some fancy name like Arbutus. That was Grandma’s pen name. Then some of the other ladies who had the same problem wrote back and told you what they had done about it, signing themselves One Who Knows or Xanthippe or whatever. Very often, the problem disposed of, you kept on for years writing to each other through the columns of the paper, telling each other about your children and your canning and your new dining room suite. That’s what happened to Grandma. She and a woman called Sea Gull corresponded for a quarter of a century. Sea Gull was Grandma’s true . . . friend.

“When I was about 16, Mrs. Wilcox died. In a small town, no matter how much you have hated your next-door neighbor, it is only common decency to run over and see what practical service you can do the bereaved.

"Grandma, neat in a percale apron to show that she meant what she said about being put to work, crossed the two lawns to the Wilcox house, where the Wilcox daughters set her to cleaning the already immaculate front parlor for the funeral. And there on the parlor table in the place of honor was a huge scrapbook, and in the scrapbook, pasted neatly in parallel columns were [Grandma's] letters to Sea Gull over the years and Sea Gull's letters to her. [Though neither woman had known it,] Grandma's worst enemy had been her best friend.

"That was the only time I remembered seeing my grandmother cry. I didn't know then exactly what she was crying about, but I do now. She was crying for all the wasted years that could never be salvaged."¹²

Live so we have no regrets

My brothers and sisters, may we resolve from this day forward to fill our hearts with love. May we go the extra mile to include in our lives any who are lonely or downhearted or who are suffering in any way. May we "[cheer] up the sad and [make] someone feel glad."¹³ May we live

so that when that final summons is heard, we may have no serious regrets, no unfinished business, but will be able to say with the Apostle Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."¹⁴ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. "Welcome, Welcome, Sabbath Morning," *Hymns*, no. 280.
2. John 11:25-26.
3. John 14:27.
4. Luke 23:46.
5. Minnie Louise Haskins, "The Gate of the Year," in James Dalton Morrison, ed. *Masterpieces of Religious Verse* (1948), 92.
6. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 76:22-24.
8. "Have I Done Any Good?" *Hymns*, no. 223.
9. *Hymns*, no. 223.
10. Mosiah 2:17.
11. In *Works of Charles Dickens* (1982), 543, 581.
12. "The True Story of Arbutus and Sea Gull," in Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen, *A 3rd Serving of Chicken Soup for the Soul* (1996), 201-4.
13. *Hymns*, no. 223.
14. 2 Timothy 4:7.

President Boyd K. Packer

Coming forth of the Book of Mormon

I hold in my hand a first-edition copy of the Book of Mormon. It was printed in 1830 on a hand-operated letter press at the E. B. Grandin Company in the village of Palmyra, New York.

In June of 1829, Joseph Smith, then 23 years old, called on 23-year-old Mr. Grandin in company with Martin Harris, a local farmer. Mr. Grandin had three months earlier advertised his intent to publish books. Joseph Smith provided pages of a handwritten manuscript.

If the content of the book did not doom it to remain obscure, the account of where it came from certainly would. Imagine an angel directing a teenage boy to the woods where he found buried a stone vault and a set of golden plates.

The writings on the plates were translated by use of a Urim and Thummim, which is referred to a number of times in the Old Testament¹ and described by Hebrew scholars as an instrument "whereby the revelation was given and truth declared."²

Before the book was off the press, pages of it were stolen and printed in the local newspaper, accompanied by ridicule. Opposition was destined to excite mobs to kill the Prophet Joseph Smith and drive those who believed him into the wilderness.

From that very unlikely beginning to this day, 108,936,922 copies of the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ have been printed. It has been published in 62 languages, with selections of it in another 37 languages, and 22 more translations are in process.

Now 60,000 full-time missionaries in 142 countries pay their own way to devote two years of their lives to testify that the Book of Mormon is true.

Herbert Schreiter and Manfred Schütze

For generations it has inspired those who read it. Herbert Schreiter had read his German translation of the Book of Mormon. In it he read:

"When ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

"And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things."³

Herbert Schreiter tested the promise and joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In 1946, released as a prisoner of war, Herbert returned to his wife and three little daughters in Leipzig, Germany. Soon thereafter, he went as a missionary to Bernburg, Germany. Alone, without a companion, he sat cold and hungry in a room, wondering how he should begin.

He thought of what he had to offer the war-devastated people. He printed by hand a placard which read, "Will there be a further life after death?" and posted it on a wall.

About that same time, a family from a small village in Poland came to Bernburg.

Manfred Schütze was four years old. His father had been killed in the war. His mother, with his grandparents and his mother's sister, also a widow, and her two little girls, were forced to evacuate their village with only 30 minutes' notice. They grabbed what they could and headed west. Manfred and his mother pulled and pushed a small cart. At times the ailing grandfather rode in the cart. One Polish officer looked at the pathetic little Manfred and began to weep.

At the border, soldiers ransacked their belongings and threw their bedding into the river. Manfred and his mother were then separated from the family. His mother wondered if they might have gone to Bernburg, where her grandmother was born, perhaps to relatives there. After weeks of unbelievable suffering, they arrived in Bernburg and found the family.

The seven of them lived together in one small room. But their troubles were not over. The mother of the two little girls died. The grieving grandmother cried out for a preacher, and asked, "Will I see my family again?"

The preacher answered, "My dear lady, there is no such thing as the Resurrection. They who are dead are dead!"

They wrapped the body in a paper bag for burial.

On the way from the grave, the grandfather talked of taking their own lives, as many others had done. Just then they saw the placard that Elder Schreiter had posted on the building—"Is there further life after death?"—with an invitation from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. At a meeting they learned of the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ.

The book explains:

- The purpose of mortal life and death;⁴
- The certainty of life after death;⁵

- What happens when the spirit leaves the body;⁶
- The description of the Resurrection;⁷
- How to receive and retain a remission of your sins;⁸
- What hold justice or mercy may have on you;⁹
- What to pray for;¹⁰
- Priesthood;¹¹
- Covenants and ordinances;¹²
- The office and ministry of angels;¹³
- The still, small voice of personal revelation;¹⁴
- And preeminently, the mission of Jesus Christ;¹⁵
- And many other jewels that make up the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

They joined the Church. Soon their lives changed. The grandfather found work as a baker and could provide bread for his family and also for Elder Schreiter, who had given them "the bread of life."¹⁶

Then help came from the Church in the United States. Manfred grew up eating grain out of little sacks with a picture of a beehive on them and peaches from California. He wore clothes from the welfare supplies of the Church.

Soon after I was released from the air force, I went to the welfare mill at Kaysville, Utah, to help fill bags of wheat for shipment to the starving people in Europe. I like to think one of the bags of grain that I filled myself went to Manfred Schütze and his mother. If not, it went to others in equal need.

Elder Dieter Uchtdorf, who sits with us on the stand today as one of the Seventy, remembers to this very day the smell of the grain and the feel of it in his little-boy hands. Perhaps one of the bags I filled reached his family.

First attempts to read the book

When I was about 10, I made my first attempt to read the Book of Mormon.

The first part was easy-flowing New Testament language. Then I came to the writings of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. I could not understand them; I found them difficult to read. I laid the book aside.

I made other attempts to read the Book of Mormon. I did not read it all until I was on a troop ship with other bomber crew members, headed for the war in the Pacific. I determined that I would read the Book of Mormon and find out for myself whether it is true or not. Carefully I read and reread the book. I tested the promise that it contained. That was a life-changing event. After that, I never set the book aside.

A young man stands up for the book

Many young people have done better than I did.

A 15-year-old son of a mission president attended high school with very few members of the Church.

One day the class was given a true-or-false test. Matthew was confident that he knew the answers to all except for question 15. It read, "Joseph Smith, the alleged Mormon prophet, wrote the Book of Mormon. True or false?"

He could not answer it either way, so, being a clever teenager, he rewrote the question. He crossed out the word *alleged* and replaced the word *wrote* with *translated*. It then read, "Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet, translated the Book of Mormon." He marked it true and handed it in.

The next day the teacher sternly asked why he had changed the question. He smiled and said, "Because Joseph Smith did not *write* the Book of Mormon; he *translated* it. And he was not an *alleged* prophet; he was a prophet."

He was then invited to tell the class how he knew that.¹⁷

Treasured scriptures

In England my wife and I became acquainted with Dorothy James, the widow of a clergyman who lived at the Close of Winchester Cathedral. She brought out a family Bible which had been lost for many years.

Years before, the possessions of a family member had been sold. The new owner found the Bible in a small desk that had remained unopened for over 20 years. There were also some letters written by a child named Beaumont James. He was able to find the James family and return the long-lost family Bible.

On the title page my wife read the following handwritten note: "This Bible has been in our family since the time of Thomas James in 1683 who was a lineal descendant of Thomas James first librarian of the Bodleian Library at Oxford, who was buried in New College Chapel August 1629. [Signed] C. T. C. James, 1880."

The margins and the open pages were completely filled with notations written in English, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. One entry particularly touched her. From the bottom of the title page she read, "The fairest Impression of the Bible is to have it well printed on the Readers heart."

And then this quote from Corinthians: "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in the tables of stone, but in fleshly table of the heart" (2 Corinthians 3:2-3).¹⁸

My Book of Mormon also has many notes in the margins and is heavily underlined. I was in Florida once with President Hinckley. He turned from the pulpit and asked for a copy of the scriptures. I handed him my copy. He thumbed through it for a few seconds, turned and handed it back, saying, "I can't read this. You have got everything crossed out!"

Book of Mormon heals starving spirits

Amos prophesied of "a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord."¹⁹

In a world ever more dangerous than the world of little Manfred Schütze and Dieter Uchtdorf, the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ has the nourishing power to heal starving spirits of the world.

Manfred Schütze is now a member of the Third Quorum of Seventy and supervises our seminaries in Eastern Europe. His mother, now 88, still attends the temple at Freiberg, where Herbert Schreiter once served as a counselor to the president.

Testimonies in many languages

With Elder Walter F. González, a new member of the Seventy from Uruguay, I attended a conference in Moroni, Utah, a town with a Book of Mormon name. There is no doctor or dentist in Moroni. They must leave town to shop for groceries. Their students are bused to a consolidated high school across the valley.

We held a meeting with 236 present. Lest Elder González see only ordinary rural farmers, I gave this sentence of testimony: "I know the gospel is true and that Jesus is the Christ." I asked if someone could repeat it in Spanish. Several hands went up. Could someone repeat it in another language? It was repeated in:

Japanese
Spanish
German
Portuguese
Russian
Chinese
Tongan
Italian
Tagalog
Dutch
Finnish
Maori

Polish
Korean

French—15 languages.

Again in English: I know the gospel is true and that Jesus is the Christ.

“We preach of Christ”

I love this Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. Study it and one can understand both the Old Testament and the New Testament in the Bible. I know it is true.

In this 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, printed by 23-year-old Egbert B. Grandin for 23-year-old Joseph Smith Jr., I read from page 105:

“We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.”²⁰

And that, I assure you, is exactly what we do. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Exodus 28:30; Leviticus 8:8; Numbers 27:21; Deuteronomy 33:8; 1 Samuel 28:6; Ezra 2:63; Nehemiah 7:65.
2. John M'Clintock and James Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, 10 vols. (1867–81), “Urim and Thummim,” 10:676.
3. Moroni 10:4–5.

4. See 2 Nephi 2:21; 33:9; Alma 12:24; 34:32; 42:4.
5. See 2 Nephi 9:3–7; Mosiah 16:8; 3 Nephi 11.
6. See Alma 34:34; 40:11–14, 21.
7. See 2 Nephi 9:12; Alma 40:23; 41:2; 3 Nephi 11:1–16.
8. See Mosiah 4:1–3, 12, 26; Alma 4:14.
9. See Alma 34:15–16; 41:14; 42:15–16, 22–25.
10. See 2 Nephi 4:35; 32:8–9; Enos 1:9; Alma 13:28; 34:17–27; 37:36–37; 3 Nephi 18:19–21; Moroni 7:26.
11. See 2 Nephi 6:2; Mosiah 18:18; Alma 6:1; 13; 3 Nephi 11:21; 18:37; Moroni 2:2; 3:4.
12. See 2 Nephi 11:5; Mosiah 5:5; 18:13; Alma 13:8, 16.
13. See 2 Nephi 32:2–3; Omni 1:25; Moroni 7:25, 37.
14. See 1 Nephi 16:9; 17:44–45; Enos 1:10; Alma 32:23; Helaman 5:30; 3 Nephi 11:3.
15. See 1 Nephi 11:13–33; 2 Nephi 2:6–10; Mosiah 3:5–12; Alma 7:7–13; 3 Nephi 27:13–16.
16. John 6:35.
17. See George D. Durrant, “Helping Your Children Be Missionaries,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1977, 67.
18. As quoted in Donna Smith Packer, *On Footings from the Past: The Packers in England* (1988), 329.
19. Amos 8:11.
20. The Book of Mormon (1830), 105; see also 2 Nephi 25:26.

Bishop H. David Burton

Stand tall on the side of righteousness

A man of wisdom often offered this simple piece of advice: “David, stand tall.” My dad did not expect that I would add inches to my stature or rise up on my tiptoes. He meant that I should be courageous in my decision, not compromising principles, not violating spiritual values, and not shrinking from responsibility.

When I have followed his advice, life has been very good. When I have failed to stand tall, life has usually been unpleasant.

I recently asked my two young grandsons what it would mean to them if Heavenly Father asked them to stand tall. I noticed one inadvertently raised himself to his tippy-toes so as to seem a little taller. And then they quickly said in unison, “He wants us to do what is right.”

Out of the deep anguish and turmoil of September 11th have come many instances of men, women, and nations standing tall. Foes and friends have come together against a common enemy. Uncommon acts of bravery have become commonplace. Humanitarian response seems to know no bounds. Men and women, regardless of race or creed, have reached out to victims and their families. Countless prayers have been offered. The forces for good are standing tall against the forces of terror and senseless mayhem.

It is said that a fence-sitter eventually has to come down on one side or the other. If we are sitting on the top of life's fences, now is the time to muster the courage to stand tall on the side of righteousness and shun the shackles of sin.

Jesus stood tall against temptation

The life, ministry, and teachings of our Savior, Jesus Christ, provide a template for introspective assessment. Jesus Christ is our perfect example of one who always stood tall. He is the one who personifies integrity, strength, and courage. I would like to use three examples from the Savior's ministry.

First, after His baptism, Jesus was prompted to remove Himself to commune with His Father. For 40 days He chose not to eat, in order that His mortal body might be subjected to His divine spirit. In this weakened state, He was visited by the tempter, who suggested that the Savior use His great power to perform extraordinary feats.

To the tempter's request that He turn stones to bread to relieve His hunger, the Savior stood tall by replying, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). To the notion that He throw himself from a high place to be saved by the hands of angels, He triumphantly stated, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matthew 4:7). To the proposition that the Savior fall on

His knees and worship the devil in exchange for the wealth and splendor of earthly glory, He valiantly replied, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10).

Stand tall against love of material things

The tempter's insidious ways continue unabated. The quest for "things" has enticed some to depart from principle. Failure to distinguish between needs and wants has muddled men's minds. Families are starving for the affection, recognition, and leadership of parents. Many are resorting to unethical, immoral, and, on occasion, illegal methods to acquire more and more material goods.

If you find yourself entrapped in the pursuit of material things, now is the time to courageously stand tall. If you worship the items money can buy more than you cherish the love of God, now is the time to stand tall. If you have been blessed with abundance beyond your needs, now is the time to stand tall in sharing with those whose needs remain unfulfilled.

Stand tall against profanity and vulgarity

The second example—on one occasion the Savior called together His followers and said, "Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man" (Matthew 15:10–11).

As a normal part of everyday language, many people take the name of God in vain. Among our youth, vulgar and crude terms seem to come easily as they describe their feelings. My young friends, now is the time to stand tall in eliminating these words from your vocabulary. You know the words to which I refer. Unfortunately, you hear them used over and over again in your schools, music, and sports.

Will it take courage to stand tall? Of course it will. Can you muster the courage? Of course you can. Seek strength

from your Heavenly Father to overcome it. The Savior said, "Pray always, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you, and great shall be your blessing" (D&C 19:38). It has been said, "You reach the greatest heights while on your knees" ("Standing Tall," *New Era*, Oct. 2001, 19).

Profanity and crudeness do not exalt; they defile. My wife and I have attended hundreds of youth sporting events. Too often we hear profanity expressed by coaches and other adults who should be role models. Adults need to stand tall in eliminating crude and profane language.

Stand tall in dressing modestly

You have heard the phrase "Your actions speak so loudly I cannot hear your words." Our actions indeed speak volumes about us. We need to stand tall in following the counsel of the prophets to attire ourselves modestly. "Immodest clothing includes short shorts and skirts, tight [form-fitting] clothing, shirts that do not cover the stomach, and other revealing attire" (*For the Strength of Youth* [2001], 12). Clothing that is modest, neat, and clean uplifts. Immodest clothing degrades. If there is any question, ask yourself, "Would I feel comfortable with my appearance if I were in the Lord's presence?" (*For the Strength of Youth*, 13).

Mothers, you can be our examples and conscience in this important matter. But remember, young people can detect hypocrisy as easily as they can smell the wonderful aroma of freshly baked bread. Parents, counsel your sons and daughters and then join with them in standing tall against immodesty.

Stand tall in reaching out to neighbors

Third, you will recall that in response to the lawyer's question about who is our neighbor, the Savior recounted that a certain man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho fell among thieves and was beaten, robbed, and left for dead. The first to

come his way was a priest, who looked away and passed by on the other side of the road. Likewise, the next to discover his plight stopped to look but passed without rendering aid. The third, a Samaritan, bound up his wounds and made arrangements for his care. Then Jesus asked which of them was the neighbor. The lawyer responded that the neighbor was he who showed mercy. In response the Savior said, "Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:37; see verses 30–37).

As we reach out to our neighbors, are we sensitive not only to their needs but also to their feelings? Is our neighborliness selective and confined to those of our faith, or is it all-inclusive regardless of faith, color, or any other perceived differences?

To the Savior there was no reservation in the definition of *neighbor*. Sometimes our unique Church language can be misinterpreted and appear insensitive or even condescending to our neighbors. As Elder Ballard suggested yesterday, I too feel uncomfortable with the term *non-member*. When we refer to others as non-members, they might wonder if we feel they are not members of our community, city, or even the human race. We are quick to say we are accepting and inclusive in our neighborly relationships, but to some we too often come across as barely tolerating. Love of neighbor comes only after love of self and God. Let us stand tall in extending unequivocal love and respect to our neighbors.

Is it worth it to stand tall?

A dear family friend passed away a few years ago. He and his wife enjoyed hiking together in the mountains. One fall afternoon they hiked several miles up a steep mountainside to a beautiful waterfall. While descending the trail, several hikers making the climb upward asked the question, "Is it worth it?" Our friends' reply was always in the affirmative. Later, they observed that the effort was worth it

only if you enjoyed the fresh air, alpine beauty, exercise, and loving companionship.

Feeling intense pressure from peers and the need to be accepted, some may ask the question, "Is it worth the effort to stand tall?" To that question I respond, "If life eternal is important to you and if you want to experience real joy in this life, then standing tall is worth the determination and tireless daily effort it requires."

May we all stand tall on the side of righteousness, I pray in the sacred name of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

The choir and congregation will now sing "Redeemer of Israel." Sister Sharon G. Larsen, second counselor in the Young Women general presidency, will then address us. She will be followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then sing "Did You Think to Pray?"

The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

Sister Sharon G. Larsen

"They that be with us are more"

As parents and leaders of youth, it might be easy to lose our faith and wring our hands with worry for them and the world they are living in.

Our circumstances today are not without precedence or hope. When Enoch was the prophet, the heavens wept because of the wickedness of the world (see Moses 7:28-37). There is no doubt the heavens are weeping today.

Elisha the prophet was surrounded by the whole Syrian army determined to kill him. He reassured his worried and only companion, who was busy counting Syrian heads, that when we are on the Lord's side, regardless of numbers or worldly power, we are in the majority. I testify that the consoling words of Elisha to his young friend are still true today: "They that be with us are more than they that be with them" (2 Kings 6:16). The Lord will surround and protect our young people with chariots of fire, as He did for Elisha, in the form of parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbors, leaders, and friends who will vigorously love them and lead them.

Despite their strength, youth need help

The past four years I have been immersed in the work of Young Women. As we cross the world visiting with them, we learn to some degree about their hopes and dreams and fears and disappointments. I echo President Hinckley's words: this is "the best generation this Church has ever had" (*Church News*, 15 Feb. 1997, 3). As a whole, these young people are valiantly and energetically taking a stand for goodness and decency.

Strong and good as they are, our young people need our help. And help is available: The Young Women Personal Progress program, the Aaronic Priesthood Duty to God program, the *Guidebook for Parents and Leaders of Youth*, and the revised *For the Strength of Youth* will help parents and leaders be actively and directly involved in holding back the sliding scale of morality. Our youth want more than landlords. They want people who will love them and lead them.

A father's expressions of love

A vital part of that loving is listening. I know what listening really is because I have had the blessed experience.

I used to farm with my dad. I didn't always enjoy it, but when lunchtime came we would sit in the shade of the tall poplar trees, eat our lunch, and talk. My dad didn't use this as a golden teaching moment to lay down the law and straighten out his daughter. We just talked—about anything and everything.

This was the time I could ask questions. I felt so safe I could even ask questions that might provoke him. I remember asking him, "Why did you embarrass me in front of my friends last week when I had stayed out too late and you came and got me?"

His answer leads to another aspect of love. He wasn't being arbitrary. There were certain standards of behavior I was expected to live. He said, "Having you out late worried me. Above all, I want you safe." I realized that his love for me was stronger than his desire for sleep or the inconvenience of getting dressed and driving down the road looking for me.

Whether in a hayfield or other casual places, those times together can fill the reservoir for other times that may not be as idyllic and serene. Relationships stay intact with this kind of investment—in spite of hard doctrine and correction—or maybe because of it.

Love is listening when *they* are ready to talk—midnight, 6:00 A.M. on their way to seminary, or when you're busy with your urgencies. Have you seen the Church spot on television showing a darkened bedroom? The door opens, and in walks a little girl with a book under her arm. She goes over to where her dad is sound asleep and asks, "Daddy, will you read me a story?" The dad doesn't open his eyes; he just mumbles in his sleep, "Oh, honey, Daddy is so tired. Ask Mommy." The little girl patters over to where her mother is sleeping and asks, "Mommy, can Daddy read me a story?" You see the dad's eyes pop open, and the next picture shows all three of them together, and Dad is reading a story.

Importance of leading by example

Loving may come naturally, but leading is a polished skill that maybe we don't take seriously enough. We lead by example more strongly than any other way. That is a heavy burden for parents and leaders of youth.

Can our young people tell by the way we live and talk and pray that we love the Lord? Do they know that their Father in Heaven is a God of love by the way they feel when they are with us? Can they feel secure that we will not be moved by every wind of doctrine or the craftiness of social pressure and worldly acceptance? (see Ephesians 4:14).

If we are going to lead in righteousness, there can't be any question where we stand. Small uncertainties on our part can produce large uncertainties in our youth.

I wonder sometimes if we as mothers are the ones who make our children feel the pressure to be popular and accepted. Educating our desires so our standards are the Lord's standards sends a clear message that in the Lord's kingdom there are no double standards.

Following President Hinckley's talk to the youth last November, a young woman reported to her mother that her Young Women leader had removed her second set of earrings. These scrutinizing young people notice. They notice how short your shorts are or if you had to tuck and pin to wear that blouse; they notice what you wear (or don't wear) when you are working in your yard; they notice which line you are standing in at the movie theater.

Commitment yields eternal dividends

We have made covenants with the Lord, and leading often tests the level of our commitment to those covenants.

A young mother said, "It takes an enormous amount of time and energy to be a good parent. It is easier to let my children fall asleep in front of the television while I clean up the house and then put

them to bed than it is to read the scriptures to them, have prayers and stories, and tuck them in. But they look forward to this evening ritual, and I know this investment, even when I'm too tired to move, will pay eternal dividends." Consistent leading helps youth make wise choices, and our trust in them increases.

I remember when I was about 16 years old overhearing Mom talking to Dad. She was concerned about some choices I was making. I was not guilty of any sin more serious than the immaturity of youth, but Mom was worried. What Dad said seared into my heart. "Don't worry," he said to Mom. "I trust Sharon, and I know she'll do the right thing." Those hours in the hayfield paid off then and there. From that moment on I was bound to those loving, trusting parents.

One of the greatest tests for parents and leaders is to love the one who seems to be unlovable. This is tough duty. It stretches the heartstrings and wrenches the soul. When heartbroken parents pray for help, it often comes in the form of angel aunts or uncles, grandmas or grandpas, good friends, and leaders surrounding our loved one. They can reinforce our very message that may put our child on the track we've been praying for.

Harvest time for parents

Loving wisely and leading purposefully will help stem the tide of wickedness as we prepare the next generation for the exhilarating delights of parenthood. We never forget the joys of our 12-year-old when he first passes the sacrament or hearing the sacramental prayer given in the voice of our son. How do you explain the feeling of hearing your daughter bear her testimony of the Savior or watching her receive her Young Womanhood medalion?

We catch a glimpse of heaven when we are in the temple with our child who is kneeling across the altar with a worthy companion. They are prepared to start a life together of promise and accomplishments that we have helped to nurture. This is harvest time.

I close with my testimony that we are not alone in this sacred trust of parenting, loving, and leading. There is no greater joy. It is worth every sacrifice, every inconvenient minute, every ounce of patience, personal discipline, and endurance. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Dangerous rapids on the Colorado River

Years ago when Sister Nelson and I had several teenage daughters, we took our family on a vacation far away from telephones and boyfriends. We went on a raft trip down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon. As we started our journey, we had no idea how dangerous this trip could be.

The first day was beautiful. But on the second day, when we approached Horn Creek rapids and saw that precipitous drop ahead, I was terrified. Floating

on a rubber raft, our precious family was about to plunge over a waterfall! Instinctively I put one arm around my wife and the other around our youngest daughter. To protect them, I tried to hold them close to me. But as we reached the precipice, the bended raft became a giant sling and shot me into the air. I landed into the roiling rapids of the river. I had a hard time coming up. Each time I tried to find air, I hit the underside of the raft. My family couldn't see me, but I could hear them shouting, "Daddy! Where's Daddy?"

I finally found the side of the raft and rose to the surface. The family pulled my nearly drowned body out of the water. We were thankful to be safely reunited.

The next several days were pleasant and delightful. Then came the last day, when we were to go over Lava Falls, known as the most dangerous drop of the journey. When I saw what was ahead, I immediately asked to beach the raft and hold an emergency family council meeting, knowing that if we were to survive this experience, we needed to plan carefully. I reasoned with our family, "No matter what happens, the rubber raft will remain on top of the water. If we cling with all our might to ropes secured to the raft, we can make it. Even if the raft should capsize, we will be all right if we hang tightly to the ropes."

I turned to our little seven-year-old daughter and said, "All of the others will cling to a rope. But you will need to hold on to your daddy. Sit behind me. Put your arms around me and hold me tightly while I hold the rope."

That we did. We crossed those steep, rough rapids—hanging on for dear life—and all of us made it safely.¹

The lesson

Brothers and sisters, I nearly lost my life learning a lesson that I now give to you. As we go through life, even through very rough waters, a father's instinctive impulse to cling tightly to his wife or to his children may not be the best way to accomplish his objective. Instead, if he will lovingly cling to the Savior and the iron rod of the gospel, his family will want to cling to him and to the Savior.

This lesson is surely not limited to fathers. Regardless of gender, marital status, or age, individuals can choose to link themselves directly to the Savior, hold fast to the rod of His truth, and lead by the light of that truth. By so doing, they become examples of righteousness to whom others will want to cling.

The commandment

With the Lord, families are essential. He created the earth that we could gain physical bodies and form families.² He established His Church to exalt families. He provides temples so that families can be together forever.³

Of course, He expects fathers to preside over, provide for, and protect their families.⁴ But the Master has asked for much more. Etched in sacred scripture is the commandment to "set in order thy house."⁵ Once we as parents understand the importance and meaning of that commandment, we need to learn how to do it.

How to set your house in order

To set our house in an order pleasing to the Lord, we need to do it His way. We are to employ His attributes of "righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, [and] meekness."⁶ Each father should remember that "no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned."⁷

Parents are to be living examples of "kindness, and pure knowledge, which . . . greatly enlarge the soul."⁸ Each mother and father should lay aside selfish interests and avoid any thought of hypocrisy, physical force, or evil speaking.⁹ Parents soon learn that each child has an inborn yearning to be free. Each individual wants to make his or her own way. No one wants to be restrained, even by a well-intentioned parent. But all of us can cling to the Lord.

Ages ago, Job taught that concept. He said, "My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go."¹⁰ Nephi also taught, "Whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and . . . hold fast unto it, . . . would never perish."¹¹

These tenets are timeless as the gospel and endless as eternity. Ponder these additional scriptural admonitions:

From the Old Testament Proverbs we read, "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life."¹²

From the New Testament: "Brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught."¹³

From the Book of Mormon we learn about multitudes who were "continually holding fast to the rod of iron,"¹⁴ which Nephi likened to "the word of God."¹⁵ Anchored in truth, that iron rod is immovable and immutable.

Other divine mandates

Not only are parents to cling to the word of the Lord, but they have a divine mandate to teach it to their children. Scriptural direction is very clear:

"Inasmuch as parents have children in Zion . . . that teach them *not* to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents."¹⁶

That commandment places responsibility and accountability for the teaching of children squarely upon the shoulders of the parents. The proclamation to the world regarding the family warns that individuals "who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God."¹⁷ Today I solemnly reaffirm that reality.

In discharging these duties, we need both the Church and the family. They work hand in hand to strengthen each other. The Church exists to exalt the family. And the family is the fundamental unit of the Church.

These interrelationships are evident as we study the early history of the Church. In 1833 the Lord rebuked young leaders of His Church because of parental shortcomings. The Lord said:

"I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth.

"But verily I say unto you, . . .

"You have not taught your children light and truth, according to the commandments. . . .

"And now a commandment I give unto you [that] you shall set in order your own house, for there are many things that are not right in your house.

" . . . First set in order thy house."¹⁸

This revelation represents one of the many powerful validations of the integrity of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He did not delete from scripture words of stinging rebuke, even though some were directed to himself.¹⁹

In our day the First Presidency has again stressed parental priority. From their recent letter to the Saints, I quote: "We call upon parents to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles which will keep them close to the Church. The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions in carrying forward this God-given responsibility."²⁰

What should parents teach?

With this sacred charge in mind, let us consider what we should teach. Scriptures direct parents to teach faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost.²¹ Parents are to teach the plan of salvation²² and the importance of living in complete accord with the commandments of God.²³ Otherwise, their children will surely suffer in ignorance of God's redeeming and liberating law.²⁴ Parents should also teach by example how to consecrate their lives—using their time, talents, tithing, and substance²⁵ to establish the Church and kingdom of God upon the earth.²⁶ Living in that manner will literally bless their posterity. A scripture states, "Thy duty is unto the church forever, and this because of thy family."²⁷

Opposition to the family

Parents and children should realize that strong opposition will always come against the work and will of the Lord.²⁸ Because the work (and glory) of God is to bring to pass our immortality and eternal life as a family,²⁹ it logically follows that the work of the adversary will strike directly at the heart of the home—the family. Relentlessly Lucifer attacks the sanctity of life and the joy of parenthood.

Because the evil one is ever at work, our vigilance cannot be relaxed—not even for a moment. A small and seemingly innocent invitation can turn into a tall temptation that can lead to tragic transgression. Night and day, at home or away, we must shun sin and “hold fast that which is good.”³⁰

The seditious evils of pornography, abortion, and addiction to harmful substances serve as termites to erode the undergirding strength of a happy home and a faithful family. We cannot yield to any iniquity without putting our families at risk.

Satan wants us to be miserable just as he is.³¹ He would animate our carnal appetites and entice us to live in spiritual darkness and doubt the reality of life after death. The Apostle Paul observed, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”³²

Perpetuation of family blessings

An understanding of God’s great plan of happiness, however, fortifies our faith in the future. His plan provides answers to ageless questions: Are all our sympathies and love for each other only temporary—to be lost in death? No! Can family life endure beyond this period of mortal probation? Yes! God has revealed the eternal nature of celestial marriage and the family as the source of our greatest joy.

Brethren and sisters, material possessions and honors of the world do not en-

dure. But your union as wife, husband, and family can. The only duration of family life that satisfies the loftiest longings of the human soul is forever. No sacrifice is too great to have the blessings of an eternal marriage. To qualify, one needs only to deny oneself of ungodliness and honor the ordinances of the temple. By making and keeping sacred temple covenants, we evidence our love for God, for our companion, and our real regard for our posterity—even those yet unborn. Our family is the focus of our greatest work and joy in this life; so will it be throughout all eternity, when we can “inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, . . . powers, dominions, . . . exaltation and glory.”³³

These priceless blessings can be ours if we set our houses in order now and faithfully cling to the gospel. God lives. Jesus is the Christ. This is His Church. President Gordon B. Hinckley is His prophet. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Russell M. Nelson and Rebecca M. Taylor, “Friend to Friend,” *Friend*, Mar. 1997, 6–7.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 2:1–3.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 138:47–48.
4. See 1 Timothy 5:8.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 93:44; see also 2 Kings 20:1; Isaiah 38:1.
6. 1 Timothy 6:11.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 121:42.
9. See 1 Peter 2:1.
10. Job 27:6.
11. 1 Nephi 15:24.
12. Proverbs 4:13.
13. 2 Thessalonians 2:15. Other related scriptures include “Hold fast the . . . sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13), and “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering” (Hebrews 10:23).
14. 1 Nephi 8:30.
15. 1 Nephi 11:25.

16. Doctrine and Covenants 68:25; italics added.
17. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 93:40–44.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:47.
20. That letter, dated February 11, 1999, and signed by Presidents Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust, also described what parents might do:
 "We counsel parents and children to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities. However worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform" (also in "Policies, Announcements, and Appointments," *Ensign*, June 1999, 80).
21. See Moroni 8:10; Doctrine and Covenants 19:31; 68:25–34; 138:33; Articles of Faith 1:4.
22. See Moses 6:58–62.
23. See Leviticus 10:11; Deuteronomy 6:7; Mosiah 4:14.
24. See 2 Nephi 2:26; Mosiah 1:3; 5:8; Doctrine and Covenants 98:8.
25. See Mosiah 4:21–26; 18:27; Alma 1:27.
26. See Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38.
27. Doctrine and Covenants 23:3.
28. See Moroni 7:12–19.
29. See Moses 1:39.
30. 1 Thessalonians 5:21.
31. See 2 Nephi 2:17–18, 27.
32. 1 Corinthians 15:19.
33. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.

The choir sang "Did You Think to Pray?"

President Hinckley

"Don't forget to pray." As you leave the conference this morning, we ask you to obey traffic rules and to be careful.

We express our appreciation to the choir for the beautiful music.

Following my remarks, the session will conclude with the choir singing "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty." The benediction will then be offered by Elder R. Conrad Schultz of the Seventy. The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

The perilous times in which we live

My beloved brethren and sisters, I accept this opportunity in humility. I pray that I may be guided by the Spirit of the Lord in that which I say.

I have just been handed a note that says that a U.S. missile attack is under way. I need not remind you that we live in perilous times. I desire to speak concerning these times and our circumstances as members of this Church.

You are acutely aware of the events of September 11, less than a month ago. Out of that vicious and ugly attack we are plunged into a state of war. It is the first

war of the 21st century. The last century has been described as the most wartorn in human history. Now we are off on another dangerous undertaking, the unfolding of which and the end thereof we do not know. For the first time since we became a nation, the United States has been seriously attacked on its mainland soil. But this was not an attack on the United States alone. It was an attack on men and nations of goodwill everywhere. It was well planned, boldly executed, and the results were disastrous. It is estimated that more than 5,000 innocent people died. Among these were many from other na-

tions. It was cruel and cunning, an act of consummate evil.

Recently, in company with a few national religious leaders, I was invited to the White House to meet with the president. In talking to us he was frank and straightforward.

That same evening he spoke to the Congress and the nation in unmistakable language concerning the resolve of America and its friends to hunt down the terrorists who were responsible for the planning of this terrible thing and any who harbored such.

Now we are at war. Great forces have been mobilized and will continue to be. Political alliances are being forged. We do not know how long this conflict will last. We do not know what it will cost in lives and treasure. We do not know the manner in which it will be carried out. It could impact the work of the Church in various ways.

Our national economy has been made to suffer. It was already in trouble, and this has compounded the problem. Many are losing their employment. Among our own people, this could affect welfare needs and also the tithing of the Church. It could affect our missionary program.

We are now a global organization. We have members in more than 150 nations. Administering this vast worldwide program could conceivably become more difficult.

Forces of evil must be brought down

Those of us who are American citizens stand solidly with the president of our nation. The terrible forces of evil must be confronted and held accountable for their actions. This is not a matter of Christian against Muslim. I am pleased that food is being dropped to the hungry people of a targeted nation. We value our Muslim neighbors across the world and hope that those who live by the tenets of their faith will not suffer. I ask particularly that our own people do not become

a party in any way to the persecution of the innocent. Rather, let us be friendly and helpful, protective and supportive. It is the terrorist organizations that must be ferreted out and brought down.

We of this Church know something of such groups. The Book of Mormon speaks of the Gadianton robbers, a vicious, oath-bound, and secret organization bent on evil and destruction. In their day they did all in their power, by whatever means available, to bring down the Church, to woo the people with sophistry, and to take control of the society. We see the same thing in the present situation.

We are people of peace. We are followers of the Christ, who was and is the Prince of Peace. But there are times when we must stand up for right and decency, for freedom and civilization, just as Moroni rallied his people in his day to the defense of their wives, their children, and the cause of liberty (see Alma 48:10).

On the Larry King television broadcast the other night, I was asked what I think of those who, in the name of their religion, carry out such infamous activities. I replied:

"Religion offers no shield for wickedness, for evil, for those kinds of things. The God in whom I believe does not foster this kind of action. He is a God of mercy. He is a God of love. He is a God of peace and reassurance, and I look to Him in times such as this as a comfort and a source of strength."

Members of the Church in this and other nations are now involved with many others in a great international undertaking. On television we see those of the military leaving their loved ones, knowing not whether they will return. It is affecting the homes of our people. Unitedly, as a Church, we must get on our knees and invoke the powers of the Almighty in behalf of those who will carry the burdens of this campaign.

No one knows how long it will last. No one knows precisely where it will be

fought. No one knows what it may entail before it is over. We have launched an undertaking the size and nature of which we cannot see at this time.

Get free from debt and be prepared

Occasions of this kind pull us up sharply to a realization that life is fragile, peace is fragile, civilization itself is fragile. The economy is particularly vulnerable. We have been counseled again and again concerning self-reliance, concerning debt, concerning thrift. So many of our people are heavily in debt for things that are not entirely necessary. When I was a young man, my father counseled me to build a modest home, sufficient for the needs of my family, and to make it beautiful and attractive and pleasant and secure. He counseled me to pay off the mortgage as quickly as I could so that, come what may, there would be a roof over the heads of my wife and children. I was reared on that kind of doctrine. I urge you as members of this Church to get free of debt where possible and to have a little laid aside against a rainy day.

We cannot provide against every contingency. But we can provide against many contingencies. Let the present situation remind us that this we should do.

As we have been continuously counseled for more than 60 years, let us have some food set aside that would sustain us for a time in case of need. But let us not panic or go to extremes. Let us be prudent in every respect. And, above all, my brothers and sisters, let us move forward with faith in the Living God and His Beloved Son.

Optimism despite grim warnings

Great are the promises concerning this land of America. We are told unequivocally that it "is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land,

who is Jesus Christ" (Ether 2:12). This is the crux of the entire matter—obedience to the commandments of God.

The Constitution under which we live, and which has not only blessed us but has become a model for other constitutions, is our God-inspired national safeguard ensuring freedom and liberty, justice and equality before the law.

I do not know what the future holds. I do not wish to sound negative, but I wish to remind you of the warnings of scripture and the teachings of the prophets which we have had constantly before us.

I cannot forget the great lesson of Pharaoh's dream of the fat and lean kine and of the full and withered stalks of corn.

I cannot dismiss from my mind the grim warnings of the Lord as set forth in the 24th chapter of Matthew.

I am familiar, as are you, with the declarations of modern revelation that the time will come when the earth will be cleansed and there will be indescribable distress, with weeping and mourning and lamentation (see D&C 112:24).

Now, I do not wish to be an alarmist. I do not wish to be a prophet of doom. I am optimistic. I do not believe the time is here when an all-consuming calamity will overtake us. I earnestly pray that it may not. There is so much of the Lord's work yet to be done. We, and our children after us, must do it.

Church resources managed prudently

I can assure you that we who are responsible for the management of the affairs of the Church will be prudent and careful as we have tried to be in the past. The tithes of the Church are sacred. They are appropriated in the manner set forth by the Lord Himself. We have become a very large and complex organization. We carry on many extensive and costly programs. But I can assure you that we will not exceed our income. We will not place the Church in debt. We will tailor what we do to the resources that are available.

How grateful I am for the law of tithing. It is the Lord's law of finance. It is set forth in a few words in the 119th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. It comes of His wisdom. To every man and woman, to every boy and girl, to every child in this Church who pays an honest tithing, be it large or small, I express gratitude for the faith that is in your hearts. I remind you, and those who do not pay tithing but who should, that the Lord has promised marvelous blessings (see Malachi 3:10–12). He has also promised that “he that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming” (D&C 64:23).

I express appreciation to those who pay a fast offering. This costs the giver nothing other than going without two meals a month. It becomes the backbone of our welfare program, designed to assist those in distress.

Conflict began in the War in Heaven

Now, all of us know that war, contention, hatred, suffering of the worst kind are not new. The conflict we see today is but another expression of the conflict that began with the War in Heaven. I quote from the book of Revelation:

“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

“And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

“And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ” (Revelation 12:7–10).

That must have been a terrible conflict. The forces of evil were pitted against the forces of good. The great deceiver, the son of the morning, was defeated and

banished, and took with him a third of the hosts of heaven.

The book of Moses and the book of Abraham shed further light concerning this great contest. Satan would have taken from man his agency and taken unto himself all credit and honor and glory. Opposed to this was the plan of the Father, which the Son said He would fulfill, under which He came to earth and gave His life to atone for the sins of mankind.

From the day of Cain to the present, the adversary has been the great mastermind of the terrible conflicts that have brought so much suffering.

Treachery and terrorism began with him. And they will continue until the Son of God returns to rule and reign with peace and righteousness among the sons and daughters of God.

Death is not the end

Through centuries of time, men and women, so very, very many, have lived and died. Some may die in the conflict that lies ahead. To us, and we bear solemn testimony of this, death will not be the end. There is life beyond this as surely as there is life here. Through the great plan which became the very essence of the War in Heaven, men shall go on living.

Job asked, “If a man die, shall he live again?” (Job 14:14). He replied:

“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

“And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

“Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another” (Job 19:25–27).

We can feel peace, not fear

Now, brothers and sisters, we must do our duty, whatever that duty might be. Peace may be denied for a season. Some of our liberties may be curtailed. We may

be inconvenienced. We may even be called on to suffer in one way or another. But God our Eternal Father will watch over this nation and all of the civilized world who look to Him. He has declared, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 33:12). Our safety lies in repentance. Our strength comes of obedience to the commandments of God.

Let us be prayerful. Let us pray for righteousness. Let us pray for the forces of good. Let us reach out to help men and women of goodwill, whatever their religious persuasion and wherever they live. Let us stand firm against evil, both at home and abroad. Let us live worthy of the blessings of heaven, reforming our lives where necessary and looking to Him, the Father of us all. He has said, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

Are these perilous times? They are. But there is no need to fear. We can have peace in our hearts and peace in our homes. We can be an influence for good in this world, every one of us.

May the God of heaven, the Almighty, bless us, help us, as we walk our various ways in the uncertain days that lie ahead. May we look to Him with unfailing faith. May we worthily place our reliance on His Beloved Son, who is our great Redeemer, whether it be in life or in death, is my prayer in His holy name, even the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty."

Elder R. Conrad Schultz offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 7, 2001. This session was conducted by President James E. Faust.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President James E. Faust

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating

in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "High on the Mountain Top." After the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder F. Melvin Hammond of the Seventy.

The choir sang "High on the Mountain Top."

Elder F. Melvin Hammond offered the invocation.

President Faust

The choir will now sing "Nearer, My God, to Thee." Following the singing, El-

ders L. Tom Perry and Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. We will then be pleased to hear from Elder Robert F. Orton of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Nearer, My God, to Thee."

Elder L. Tom Perry

The returned missionary

This afternoon I want to address my remarks to a special group. During the last many years, hundreds of thousands of you have returned from serving full-time missions. Each of you heeded the same call the Savior gave to His disciples:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19–20).

It was your privilege to go to the many parts of the world to carry the Savior's message—an invitation to come unto Him and enjoy the fruits of His gospel. You were privileged to live in different cultures and learn different languages. It was also a time of building your own personal testimony of the mission of Jesus Christ.

I have always been honored to visit with you returned missionaries over the years. Many of you long to return and visit the people you had the privilege of serving. You are anxious to share moments of your experiences in the mission field. In your wedding announcements and your employment résumés, you insert a line that identifies you as a returned missionary. While you no longer wear a missionary's badge, you seem anxious to identify yourselves as one who has served the Lord as a missionary. Moreover, you have fond memories because you discovered the joy of gospel service.

I have also learned from many conversations with you that the adjustment associated with leaving the mission field and returning to the world you left behind is sometimes difficult. Perhaps it is hard to keep alive the spirit of missionary work when you are no longer serving as a full-time missionary of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

May I offer just a few suggestions?

Stay close to the Lord through prayer

One of the strongest recollections I have of being a missionary is how close I drew to the Lord through the practice of regular prayer. In my day the Mission Home was located on State Street in Salt Lake City. It was a large house that had been converted to a mission training center. It had large dormitory rooms with perhaps as many as 10 beds in a room. We checked in on Sunday night.

The week before I entered the mission field was an exciting time. There were a lot of parties and farewells. I am afraid that I was not properly rested and prepared for the training I was to receive at the Mission Home. As the evening of our first day in the Mission Home came to a close, I was weary. While waiting for the other missionaries to prepare themselves for bed, I stretched out on my bed and promptly fell asleep. My sleep, however, was interrupted by a feeling that I was surrounded. As the fog of sleep lifted, I heard the words of a prayer being said. I opened my eyes, and much to my surprise I found all the elders in my dormitory room kneeling around my bed, conclud-

ing the day with a prayer. I quickly closed my eyes and acted as if I was asleep. I was too embarrassed to get out of bed and join them. Even though my first experience with prayer as a missionary was an embarrassing one, it was the beginning of two wonderful years of frequently calling upon the Lord for guidance.

Throughout my mission I prayed with my companion each morning as we began a new day. The process was repeated each night before we retired. We offered a prayer before we studied, a prayer as we left our apartment to go out tracting, and, of course, special prayers when special guidance was needed to direct our missionary work. The frequency of our appeals to our Father in Heaven gave us strength and courage to press forward in the work to which we had been called. Answers would come, sometimes in astonishingly direct and positive ways. The guidance of the Holy Spirit seemed to be magnified the more times we appealed to the Lord for direction on a given day.

As I look back on my life following my mission, I realize that there were periods when I was able to maintain the same closeness to the Lord that I experienced in the mission field. There were also periods when the world seemed to creep in and I was less consistent and faithful with my prayers.

Wouldn't this be a good time for a little self-evaluation to determine if we still have the same relationship with our Father in Heaven that we enjoyed in the mission field? If the world has diverted us from the practice of prayer, we then have lost a great spiritual power. Maybe it is time that we rekindle our missionary spirit through more frequent, consistent, and mighty prayer.

Maintain the habit of scripture study

The next fond memory I have as a missionary is that of daily engaging in

scripture study. The discipline of following a scripture-study plan of learning the gospel was a wonderful, rewarding experience. The knowledge of the teachings of the scriptures would unfold in a glorious way through individual study. As a missionary, I recall marveling at how completely the Lord had prepared a plan for His children here on earth, how in all dispensations of time He has inspired the minds of His prophets to record His dealings with them. His words are always positive and direct, revealing the blessings that come through following His law and His way.

We would also take an hour or more each day to study as companions together. Having two sets of eyes examine the doctrine of the kingdom seemed to multiply our understanding. We would read together, then share our insights.

Our minds were sharpened as we followed the daily practice of individual and companion study. The practice brought us closer together as companions and increased our understanding of the doctrines of the kingdom.

When we leave the mission field, we no longer have companions to help us discipline our study habits, but that does not mean that the practice should be discontinued. As we return home, how great it would be to hold daily family scripture study. If we leave home, couldn't we invite roommates and friends to study with us? The practice of holding regular study classes would help keep the doctrines of the kingdom clear in our minds and offset the persistent intrusion of worldly concerns. Of course, when we marry, we have eternal companions with whom we can study and share gospel teachings. The scriptures are always there to deepen our understanding of the purpose of life and what we need to do to make life more fulfilling and rewarding. Please keep alive the practice of regular individual and companion scripture study.

Rededicate yourselves to sharing the gospel

Do you remember the joy that comes from teaching the gospel to someone who has been deprived of these teachings throughout his or her life, the excitement that comes when you teach the law of the Lord, and the blessings that are received from following Him? Could you ever forget the joy of your first baptism in the mission field?

In my day the chapels were not equipped with baptismal fonts. My first baptism was in the Scioto River in the state of Ohio. It was on a cool fall day, and the water seemed even colder than the air. I remember the shock of wading into the cold river while encouraging my investigator to follow me. The coldness of the air and the water, however, soon vanished as I administered the ordinance of baptism. Seeing the radiant face of the individual who came up out of the waters of baptism is an image I will never forget.

Opportunities to teach the gospel and baptize are not exclusive to those who wear the badge of a full-time missionary. I wonder why we allow the fire of missionary service to diminish when we return to the activities of our life in the world.

There has never been a time in the history of mankind when we have been better equipped to teach the gospel to our Father in Heaven's children here on earth. And they seem to need it more today than they ever have. We see a deterioration of faith. We see an increased love for worldliness and a depletion of moral values, both of which will cause increased heartache and despair. What we need is a royal army of returned missionaries re-enlisted into service. While they would not wear the badge of a full-time missionary, they could possess the same resolve and determination to bring the light of the gospel to a world struggling to find its way.

I call on you returned missionaries to rededicate yourselves, to become re-

infused with the desire and spirit of missionary service. I call on you to look the part, to be the part, and to act the part of a servant of our Father in Heaven. I pray for your renewed determination to proclaim the gospel, that you may become more actively engaged in this great work the Lord has called all of us to do. I want to promise you there are great blessings in store for you if you continue to press forward with the zeal you once possessed as a full-time missionary.

Reunion with first companion

I had an experience a few years ago of receiving a call from my son, Lee. He told me that my first missionary companion was in his neighborhood, and he wanted to spend a few minutes with me. Lee and I went over to the home of my first companion's daughter, whom he was visiting. We had a special experience of being together after many years of not seeing one another.

As missionaries we were given the opportunity of opening up a new town in Ohio to missionary work. Because of this assignment, we were allowed to labor together for 10 months. He was my trainer, my first companion. He came from a family that had taught him the value of hard work. It was difficult for me to keep up with him, but as we served together we drew close together as companions.

Our companionship did not end with the 10-month assignment. World War II was raging, and when I returned home I had only a short time to adjust before I was drafted into military service. On my first Sunday in boot camp, I attended an LDS service. I saw the back of a head that was very familiar to me. It was my first missionary companion. We spent most of the next two and a half years together.

Although circumstances were very different for us in military service, we tried to continue the practices of missionary service. As often as we could, we prayed to-

gether. When circumstances allowed, we had scripture study together. I recall many companion study sessions under the light of a Coleman lantern in a shrapnel-scarred tent. Several times our reading of the scriptures was interrupted by the sound of an air raid siren. We would quickly turn off our lantern, then kneel together and close our study class with a prayer.

We were both set apart as group leaders, and we again had the opportunity to serve and teach together the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior. We were more successful in the military than we had been as full-time missionaries. Why? Because we were experienced returned missionaries.

My visit with my first missionary companion was the last opportunity I had to be with him. He was suffering from an incurable disease and died only a few months later. It was a wonderful experience to relive our missions together and then tell about our lives following our missionary service. We recounted our service in bishoprics, high councils, and stake presidencies, and, of course, we bragged about our children and our grandchildren. As we sat and thrilled at the opportunity of being together again, I couldn't help but think of the account in the 17th chapter of the book of Alma:

"And now it came to pass that as Alma was journeying from the land of Gideon southward, away to the land of Manti, behold, to his astonishment, he met with the sons of Mosiah journeying towards the land of Zarahemla.

"Now these sons of Mosiah were with Alma at the time the angel first appeared unto him; therefore Alma did rejoice exceedingly to see his brethren; and what added more to his joy, they were still his brethren in the Lord; yea, and they had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.

"But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God" (Alma 17:1-3).

A great army of returned missionaries

I wish all of you could have an experience similar to the one I had with my first missionary companion, that you could pause and reflect on a time of service when you gave diligently of your time and your talents in building our Father in Heaven's kingdom. If you try to make it happen, I promise you that it will be one of the thrilling experiences of your life. You are a great army of returned missionaries. Go forward with new zeal and determination, and through your example shine the light of the gospel in this troubled world. This is the Lord's work in which we are engaged. God lives. Jesus is the Christ. We belong to His Church. This is my witness to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Seventh commandment is a vital shield

With you, my brothers and sisters, I have appreciated afresh the prophetic ministry of President Hinckley. I testify that he was foreordained a long, long time ago, and we are glad.

I share the reluctance Jacob expressed when he wrote of the problems of unchastity and infidelity, the breaching of what some number as the seventh commandment. Anxious because his audience had feelings "exceedingly tender and

chaste and delicate," Jacob did not wish to "enlarge the wounds of those who [were] already wounded, instead of consoling and healing their wounds" (Jacob 2:7, 9). Nevertheless, Jacob's words about the harsh consequences of immorality are diagnostic as well as poetic: "Many hearts died, pierced with deep wounds" (Jacob 2:35). Today we move among so many of the walking wounded, and the casualty list grows.

Hence, reassuring gospel givens could rightly be stressed, such as how individuals who truly repent, though their "sins be as scarlet," may become "as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18). But the rigors and the rich rewards of repentance are not the purposes of this talk. Nor is giving deserved praise to the many valiant youth and adults who practice chastity and fidelity—even when, for example, only a shrinking minority of American society now believes premartial relations are wrong. Commendations, therefore, to those who have *faith unto obedience* regarding the commandments, as well as salutations to those who have "*faith unto repentance*" (Alma 34:15; italics added) when commandments are violated.

Clearly, unchastity and infidelity bring serious consequences, such as the rippling, even haunting effects of illegitimacy and fatherlessness, along with disease and the shredding of families. So many marriages hang by a thread or have already snapped. This quiet but deep crisis coexists with vexing international crises in our time, including war. Jesus spoke of latter days when there would be "distress of nations, with perplexity" and how all things would be in commotion (Luke 21:25; see also D&C 88:91; 45:26).

Therefore, the keeping of the seventh commandment is such a vital *shield*! (see Exodus 20:14). By our lowering or losing that shield, the much-needed blessings of heaven are lost. No person or nation can prosper for long without those blessings.

Lack of faith brings increased immorality

Strange, in a time otherwise obsessed with entitlements, how little concern there is over our becoming entitled to the blessings of heaven. Instead, a declining belief by some in ultimate immortality has only intensified proximate immorality, "leading away many . . . telling them that when a man was dead, that was the end thereof" (Alma 30:18). A Japanese thinker, looking at our pleasure-centered Western society, said, almost confrontingly:

"If there is nothing beyond death, then what is wrong with giving oneself wholly to pleasure in the short time one has left to live? The loss of faith in the 'other world' has saddled modern Western society with a fatal moral problem" (Takeshi Umehara, "The Civilization of the Forest: Ancient Japan Shows Post-modernism the Way," in Nathan P. Gardels, ed., *At Century's End* [1995], 190).

Therefore, being good citizens includes being good, such as in knowing the clear difference between lusting after a neighbor and loving one's neighbor! Matthew Arnold wisely observed that while "Nature cares nothing [for] chastity, . . . human nature . . . cares about it a great deal" (*Philistinism in England and America*, vol. 10 of *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. R. H. Super [1974], 160). To which I add: divine nature cares infinitely more!

Starve the natural man

The influential tendencies of the natural man are unfriendly to the seventh commandment, and these involve the self-damaging "carnal, sensual, [and] devilish" (Mosiah 16:3; see also Mosiah 3:19; Moses 5:13). If these three words sound too harsh, consider, brothers and sisters, the awful goal the adversary pursues: "that all men might be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27). Misery really does love company!

One of the best ways we can put "off the natural man" is to starve him (Mosiah 3:19). Weakened, he is more easily dislodged. Otherwise, he insists on getting his ticket punched at every stop on the temptation train. Sadly, corrective words do not usually help the natural man either because lust chokes the word (see Mark 4:19).

Rationalizations for immorality

Unfortunately, breaking the seventh commandment is made easier when clever sophists persuade some that whatsoever individuals do is really "no crime" (Alma 30:17). Yet some have eager ears, actually itching to hear something less than the truth, so they follow those who try to smooth the sharp-edged, inconvenient commandments (see 2 Timothy 4:3). Nevertheless, the proverb remains true: "Whoso committeth adultery . . . lacketh understanding" (Proverbs 6:32).

The commandments are ignored by still others who are otherwise focused. Dostoevsky has one of his characters say, "The ages will pass, and humanity will proclaim by the lips of their sages that there is no crime, and therefore no sin; there is only hunger" (Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Constance Garnett [1952], 130–31).

The adversary has also artificially inflated the concept of privacy, further lubricating the slide away from individual accountability! After all, a few mouse clicks on a computer can take one, privately and quickly, into enemy territory without having to go through passport control, the only remaining restraint then being the checkpoint of dulled conscience.

But God does not have two sets of Ten Commandments, one indoor and another outdoor! Nor are there two approved roads to repentance. True, a weekend of regret may produce some "sorrowing of the damned" but not the "mighty change" which only godly sorrow produces (Mor-

mon 2:13; Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:13–14; see also 2 Corinthians 7:10).

Yes, we are still free to choose. Yes, a war was even fought in heaven to preserve our moral agency. Yet down here, the great gift of agency is often surrendered without so much as a mild whimper!

Preventing violations of the law of chastity

There are so many ways to keep the shielding seventh commandment firmly in place. Instructively, for instance, David's fall, at least in part, was facilitated because he was not where duty lay: "It came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that . . . David tarried still at Jerusalem" (2 Samuel 11:1). Then, as you know, came the lustful view from the roof and all the sadness that followed. Implicit, therefore, in the instruction "Stand ye in holy places" is to avoid indulgent tarrying (D&C 87:8; see also Matthew 24:15).

Those who live "after the manner of happiness" (2 Nephi 5:27) also wisely develop protective, spiritual manners. These manners are reflected in their proper dress, language, humor, and music, thereby sending the signal of determined discipleship (see Proverbs 23:7).

Moreover, the avoidance of later difficulty includes not carrying into marriage unrepented-of sins, causing spouses to start off "unequally yoked together" (2 Corinthians 6:14). Likewise, husbands and wives can deliberately avoid drifting apart by refusing to relax their loyalties and by not being caught in the strong currents leading to the waterfalls. Equally to be avoided is the stagnant swamp of self-pity. Therein, individuals can easily rationalize any remaining sense of accountability by pushing aside the restraints of both conscience and covenants, seeking to "justify [themselves] before men" for that which is an "abomination [before] God" (Luke 16:15).

Seeing through sensuality's deceptive spin is another vital preventive. For instance, some of those who flout the seventh commandment by their immoral lifestyles are like Cain's declaring, "I am free" (Moses 5:33), after breaking the sixth commandment by slaying Abel. Such erroneous thinking about freedom evokes Peter's warning words: "Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage" (2 Peter 2:19; see also 2 Nephi 2:26–30). Truc, strident souls may even fake laughter amid bondage and sin, but another proverb applies: "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness" (Proverbs 14:13).

Deceptive labels attached to evil

In an age rightly concerned with truth in advertising, how intellectually insulting are certain deceptive labels: *Ecstasy* should read *misery*; *Rave* is really a *mournful mutter* emanating from sensuality gone amok. For instance, some foolishly think a little lewd dancing is harmless. These individuals do not "sin ignorantly" (3 Nephi 6:18). By imitating and by underestimating the enemy, they end up compromising themselves while confusing and disappointing their friends!

Ever wonder why the sensual scene so often features flashing but fading lights? Or why all the reinforcing glitz? Or why all the loudness masquerading as music? Because, fearful of the dawn, evil cannot stand the steady scrutiny of bright truth, nor can it endure the quiet reflections of soul-searching!

Thus the drumbeat of desensitization deadens the tastebuds of the soul by responding *illegitimately* to the *legitimate* need for belonging and for love, as predators and victims sadly become "past feeling" (1 Nephi 17:45; see also Ephesians 4:19; Moroni 9:20).

Lust is no substitute for love

Henry Fairlie wrote of how "the lustful person will usually be found to have a

terrible hollowness at the center of his life" (Henry Fairlie, *The Seven Deadly Sins Today* [1978], 187). Still, some naive youth talk about "filling their canteens," which will be empty except for the residual sand and gravel of toxic memories. Fairlie also wrote, "Lust is not interested in its partners, but only in the gratification of its own craving. . . . Lust dies at the next dawn, and when it returns in the evening, to search where it may, it is with its own past erased" (*The Seven Deadly Sins Today*, 175).

However costumed or made up, lust is no substitute for love; actually, brothers and sisters, it chokes out the development of real love, causing "the love of many [to] wax cold" (Matthew 24:12). No wonder we are told to "bridle all [our] passions, that [we] may be filled with love" (Alma 38:12). Otherwise, oozing passions fill the available soul space, and double occupancy is not possible.

Societal trends that accelerate immorality

Previously, society has often had helpful, though subtle, balancing and restraining mechanisms—including families and churches and schools—to checkrein excessive individual behavior. But too often some of these mechanisms are either missing, malfunctioning, or equivocating.

Moreover, these foregoing trends are further accelerated by the fashionable non-judgmentalism which excuses whatever wrong individuals do—as long as they do anything else commendable. After all, didn't Mussolini make the trains run on time? Violators of the seventh commandment may still make useful contributions, but they pay a hidden, personal cost (see Alma 28:13). Of King Morianton we read, "He did [deal justly with his] people, but not [with] himself because of his many whoredoms" (Ether 10:11). Apparently a fair, no-respecter-of-persons leader, Morianton did not respect himself! His self-inflicted wounds were masked by the outward ornamentation of riches and buildings (see Ether 10:12).

The unrepentant will suffer as Jesus did

So sobering is all of the foregoing that what follows needs to be said, and I do not hesitate to say it. The revelations tell us that commensurate with their own sins, unrepentant sinners must suffer even as Jesus did for ours, as they one day personally experience the full justice of God (see D&C 19:16–18). Additionally, those who in various ways persistently foster and intensify this often drug-drenched drama of immorality—whether as promoters, enablers, facilitators, or profiteers—will also then face and then feel all the misery they have caused countless others!

Take a stand—alone if necessary

Finally, brothers and sisters, in certain times and circumstances, discipleship requires us to be willing to stand alone! Our willingness to do so, here and now, is consistent with Christ's kneeling alone,

there and then, in Gethsemane. In the final atoning process, "none were with [Him]" (D&C 133:50; see also Matthew 26:38–45).

As we take our stand, the faithful will not be alone, however. Of necessity, the angel who stood by Christ in Gethsemane to strengthen Him left Him (see Luke 22:43). If we hold aloft the shield of faith in God and faith in His commandments, His angels will be "round about [us], to bear [us] up" and "have charge over [us]" (D&C 84:88; 109:22). Of this promise I testify. And now, therefore, in terms of the weather in our souls, brothers and sisters, I testify that we set the dial. We so determine the degree of our happiness in this and the next world. I likewise testify that our compliance with God's commandments, including the seventh, invites God to place His hand on ours as we set the dial. It is the hand of Him who desires to give us all that He hath (see D&C 84:38). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Robert F. Orton

The first and great commandment

The attention of people around the world has been drawn, during the past four weeks, to the willful, intentional, and destructive acts of terrorism and hatred.

Hatred is the antithesis of love. Lucifer is its chief proponent and perpetrator and has been since his approach to the plan of salvation was rejected by the Father. It was he who influenced Judas to deliver Jesus to the chief priests for 30 pieces of silver (see Matthew 26:14–15). It is he, the enemy of all righteousness and the father of contention, who, "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

On the other hand, it was that same Jesus whom Judas delivered to the chief priests who said, "Love your enemies, . . . and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you" (3 Nephi 12:44;

see also Matthew 5:44). And it was He who pleaded for the soldiers who crucified Him, saying, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

I thought for many years that love was an attribute. But it is more. It is a commandment. In His dialogue with the lawyer, a Pharisee, Jesus said:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:37–40; see also Galatians 5:14).

President Hinckley has said that "love is like the Polar Star. In a changing world,

it is a constant. It is . . . the very essence of the gospel." "Without love . . . there is little else to commend the gospel to us as a way of life" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 319, 317).

The Apostle John said that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). Thus, on Him, as the embodiment of love, hang all the law and the prophets.

The Apostle Paul taught that faith, which is the first principle of the gospel, works by love (see Galatians 5:6). What a valuable doctrine to understand! Love is the driving force behind faith. Just as a fire at home on a cold winter night makes it warm, so love of God and neighbor gives us faith, with which anything is possible.

Love neighbors to show love for God

Most of us profess to love God. The challenge, I have observed, is loving our neighbor. The term *neighbor* includes family, people with whom we work, those whom we see in geographical proximity to our home and at church, and even the enemy, though we do not condone what the latter does. If we do not love all of these, our brothers and sisters, can we truly say that we love God? The Apostle John declared that "he who loveth God love his brother also," and added, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar" (1 John 4:21, 20). Love of God and neighbor must therefore be inseparably connected.

Our eternal progression leans heavily on the degree to which we love. Webster defines *love* as the "unselfish, loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another; an affection based on admiration, benevolence or common interests" (*Longman Webster English College Dictionary*, overseas edition). And Mormon treats as synonymous the terms "pure love of Christ" and "charity" (see Moroni 7:47). We can best demonstrate our love to God by keeping His commandments. And we

can show our love to God and neighbor by charitable acts of service.

Love changes the lives of two men

Permit me two illustrations. In the Transylvanian Alps of Romania, a man, with his wife and two children, was baptized into the Church. He became the leader of his branch; however, due to economic and family pressures, he became inactive for a time. Upon his return to activity, he reported that as he had stepped out of the water at the time of his baptism, someone whispered in his ear, "I love you." No one had ever told him that before. His recollection of that expression of love, and the loving and charitable acts and expressions of members of his branch, brought him back.

Several years ago a young man became involved in the ways of the world. For a time, his parents had no influence on him. Two high priests who were neighbors and members of his ward but who had no specific calling to serve him, together with an uncle and others, put their arms around and befriended him. They nursed him back into activity and encouraged him to prepare for a mission. They told him that they loved him and demonstrated that love by their conduct toward him. This changed the young man's life. It takes an abundance of love and a cooperative effort to raise a child.

We come to love those we serve

"No one can assist in this work [unless] he shall be humble and full of love" (D&C 12:8). "By love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13). Just as service is a natural consequence of love, so is love a natural consequence of service. Husbands, serve your wives. Wives, serve your husbands. Husbands and wives, serve your children. And to all we say, serve God and neighbor. As we do so, we will come to love the object of our devotion and thus be

obedient to the first and great commandment of love.

No disputations, contention, or hatred

Following His Resurrection in Jerusalem, Jesus appeared to the Nephites in the Americas. After teaching about baptism, He warned against anger and contention, saying:

“And there shall be no disputations among you. . . . For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another” (3 Nephi 11:22, 29).

Brothers and sisters, if we are obedient to the commandment of love, there will be no disputations, contention, or hatred between or among us. We will not speak ill of one another but will treat each other with kindness and respect, realizing that each of us is a child of God. There will be no Nephites, Lamanites, or other “-ites” among us, and every man, woman, and child will deal justly one with another.

Continue to give and love

Early one morning in Bucharest, as I jogged through Cismigiu Park, I observed an old tree which was struggling to give new branches—to give new life. The symbol of life is to give. We give so much to family and friends and to community and Church that at times we, as the old tree, may think that life is too difficult—that constantly giving is a burden too heavy to bear. We may think that it would be eas-

ier to give up and to do only that which the natural man does. But we should not and will not quit. Why? Because we must continue to give, just like Christ and the old tree gave. As we give just a little bit, let us think of Him who gave His life that we might live.

Jesus, near the end of His mortal life, revisited the doctrine of love when He instructed His adherents that as He had loved them, so they also should love one another. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

I conclude that, given the purpose of our existence, if we do not love God and neighbor, whatever else we do will be of little eternal consequence.

I testify of the divinity of Christ and the reality of His mission to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. That we might love as He loved and continues to love, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

The choir and congregation will now sing “Let Us All Press On.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Wayne S. Peterson and H. Ross Workman of the Seventy will address us. We shall then be pleased to hear from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang “Let Us All Press On.”

Elder Wayne S. Peterson

A friendly response to childish behavior

Many years ago while on vacation with my family, I had an experience that

taught me a great lesson. On a Saturday my wife and I decided to take the children for a drive and to do some shopping. During the drive the children fell asleep, and

not wanting to wake them, I volunteered to stay in the car while my wife ran into the store.

While waiting, I glanced at the car parked in front of me. It was full of children, and they were looking at me. My eyes caught the eyes of a small boy, six or seven years old. As our eyes met, he immediately stuck his tongue out at me.

My first reaction was to stick my tongue out at him. I thought, "What have I done to deserve this?" Fortunately, before I reacted I remembered a principle taught in general conference the week before by Elder Marvin J. Ashton (see Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 36–38; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1970, 59–60). He taught how important it was to act instead of react to the events around us. So I waved at the little boy. He stuck his tongue out at me again. I smiled and waved again. This time he waved back.

Soon he was joined in his enthusiastic waving by a little brother and sister. I responded by waving this way and that until my arm became tired. Then I rested it on the steering wheel and continued with every creative wave I could muster, all the time hoping their parents would quickly return or that my wife would soon come back.

The parents finally did come, and as they pulled away, my newfound friends continued to wave for as long as I could see them.

That was a simple experience, but it demonstrated that in most encounters we can *determine* the kind of experience we are going to have by how we respond. I was grateful that I chose to act in a friendly way rather than react to my young friend's childish behavior. In doing so I avoided the negative feelings I would have felt had I followed my natural instinct.

Living the Golden Rule can be difficult

In His instructions to the Nephites, the Savior taught, "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do

to you, do ye even so to them" (3 Nephi 14:12).

Imagine the effect it would have in the world if everyone practiced this Golden Rule. But to do so seems contrary to human nature. King Benjamin declared that "the natural man is an enemy to God," and will remain such until he "yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man" and learns to be "submissive, meek, humble, patient, [and] full of love" (Mosiah 3:19).

In today's fast-paced world there seems to be a greater tendency for people to act aggressively toward each other. Some are quick to take offense and respond angrily to real or imagined affronts. We've all experienced or heard reports of road rage or other examples of rude, insensitive behavior.

Unfortunately, some of this spills over into our homes, creating friction and tension among family members.

We are free to choose our response

It may seem natural to react to a situation by giving back what is given to us. But it doesn't have to be that way. Reflecting on his horrendous wartime experiences, Viktor Frankl recalled: "We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way" (*Man's Search for Meaning*, rev. ed. [1984], 86; italics added).

That is noble behavior and a high expectation, but Jesus expects no less of us. "Love your enemies," He said, "bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

A favorite hymn reinforces this teaching:

School thy feelings, O my brother;
Train thy warm, impulsive soul.
Do not its emotions smother,
But let wisdom's voice control.
["School Thy Feelings," *Hymns*,
no. 336]

The decisions we make and the way we behave are what ultimately shape our character. Charles A. Hall aptly described that process in these lines: "We sow our thoughts, and we reap our actions; we sow our actions, and we reap our habits; we sow our habits, and we reap our characters; we sow our characters, and we reap our destiny" (quoted in Burton Stevenson, sel., *The Home Book of Quotations* [1934], 845).

Be kind and loving at home

It is in the home that our behavior is most significant. It is the place where our actions have the greatest impact, for good or for ill. Sometimes we are so much "at home" that we no longer guard our words. We forget simple civility. If we are not on guard, we can fall into the habit of criticizing one another, losing our tempers, or behaving selfishly. Because they love us, our spouses and children may be quick to forgive, but they often carry away in silence unseen injuries and unspoken heartache.

There are too many homes where children fear their parents or where wives fear their husbands. Our leaders have reminded us that "fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness," and warned "that individuals who . . . abuse spouse or offspring . . . will one day stand accountable before God" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). The adversary knows that if he can foster an atmosphere of contention, conflict, and fear in the home, the Spirit is grieved and the cords that ought to bind the family are weakened.

The resurrected Lord Himself declared, "For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another" (3 Nephi 11:29).

When we feel anger or contention in our homes, we should immediately recognize what power has taken control of our lives and what Satan is endeavoring to accomplish. Solomon provided us this wise formula: "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Proverbs 15:1).

Our home should ideally be a refuge where each member feels safe, secure, loved, and insulated from harsh criticism and contention that we so often encounter in the world.

Return good for evil, as Jesus did

Christ set a perfect example of maintaining emotional control in every setting. Appearing before Caiaphas and Pilate, He was buffeted, slapped, spat upon, and mocked by His tormentors (see Matthew 26; Luke 23). The great irony was that they demeaned their Creator, whose suffering was undertaken out of love for them.

In the face of this unjust abuse, Jesus maintained His composure, refusing to act unkindly. Even on the cross, in the midst of that unspeakable agony, His plea was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

He expects the same of us. To those who would follow Him, He said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

May we evidence our discipleship by strengthening our homes in kind and loving ways. May we remember that "a soft answer turneth away wrath" and strive through our relationships and encounters to shape a character that will meet with the Savior's approval.

Jesus Christ is the perfect example. He is our Savior and our Redeemer. I tes-

tify of Him! We are led by a living prophet today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder H. Ross Workman

Murmuring—a tool of the adversary

As young missionaries, my companion and I testified that God speaks through prophets today. One man asked, “So what did your prophet say this week?” Struggling to remember the prophet’s message in the most recent *Improvement Era*, the relevant Church magazine at the time, I came to a special understanding of the importance of knowing and obeying the teachings of the living prophet.

Today I hope to persuade you to follow the living prophets and to warn of a deception the adversary has devised to prevent you from following them. The scriptures refer to that deception as “murmuring.”

Parable shows three steps of murmuring

The Savior taught a parable to warn us of the treacherous path to disobedience through “murmuring.” In the parable, we learn of a nobleman who had a choice spot of land. He told his servants to plant 12 olive trees and build a tower overlooking the olive grove. The purpose for the tower was to permit a watchman perched upon the tower to warn of the coming of the enemy. Thus, the olive grove could be protected.

The servants did not build the tower. The enemy came and broke down the olive trees. The disobedience of the servants left a catastrophe in the olive grove. (See D&C 101:43–62.)

Why did the servants fail to build the tower? The seeds of the disaster were planted by murmuring.

According to the Lord’s parable, murmuring consists of three steps, each lead-

ing to the next in a descending path to disobedience.

First, the servants began to question. They felt to exercise their own judgment upon the instruction given by their master. “What need hath my lord of this tower, seeing this is a time of peace?” they said (D&C 101:48). They questioned first in their own minds and then planted questions in the minds of others. Questioning came first.

Second, they began to rationalize and excuse themselves from doing what they had been instructed to do. They said: “Might not this money be given to the ex-changers? For there is no need of these things” (D&C 101:49). Thus, they made an excuse for disobedience.

The third step inevitably follows: slothfulness in following the commandment of the Master. The parable says, “They became very slothful, and they hearkened not unto the commandments of their lord” (D&C 101:50). Thus, the stage was set for disaster.

God has blessed His children with prophets to instruct them in His ways and prepare them for eternal life. The ways of God are not easily understood by man. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord” (Isaiah 55:8). Obedience is essential to realize the blessings of the Lord, even if the purpose of the commandment is not understood.

Murmuring of the children of Israel

The adversary whispers the deceptive invitation to murmur to thus destroy the power that comes from obedience. The pattern of murmuring can be seen clearly

in the following account of the children of Israel.

The Lord promised the children of Israel that He would send an angel to drive out the Canaanites, that Israel might inherit a land of milk and honey (see Exodus 33:1-3). When Israel reached the borders of Canaan, Moses sent spies into the countryside, and when they returned, they reported that the armies of Canaan were strong and ventured the opinion that Canaan was stronger than Israel. Then began the murmuring.

They questioned the commandment given through Moses, their living prophet. They spread their questioning to others. How could Israel defeat the giants of Canaan when the children of Israel saw themselves, by comparison, as grasshoppers? (see Numbers 13:31-33).

The questioning turned to rationalization and excuses. They claimed to fear for their wives and children. "It would have been better for us in Egypt!" they declared (see Numbers 14:2-3).

The murmuring became disobedience when Israel sought to appoint a captain who would lead them back to Egypt (see Numbers 14:4).

They simply refused to follow the living prophet. For their murmuring, the Lord relieved the children of Israel of the promised blessing that He would destroy the Canaanites and give them their promised land. Instead, He sent Israel into the wilderness to wander for 40 years.

Murmuring in Lehi's family

The familiar pattern of murmuring is again seen in the family of Lehi.

When the prophet Lehi sent his sons to Jerusalem to obtain the plates of brass, they met much opposition. First, Laman was ejected from the house of Laban for merely asking for the plates. After the sons of Lehi offered to pay for the plates with gold and silver, Laban sought their lives and confiscated their property. The

brothers huddled in the cavity of a rock to assess the situation.

Laman and Lemuel murmured. It began, as always, with questioning: "How is it possible that the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands?" they said (1 Nephi 3:31).

Next, the excuses: "Behold, he is a mighty man, and he can command fifty, yea, even he can slay fifty; then why not us?" (1 Nephi 3:31).

Finally, they were slothful. Filled with anger, resentment, and excuses, Laman and Lemuel waited by the walls of Jerusalem while the faithful Nephi accomplished the work of the Lord (see 1 Nephi 4:3-5).

Murmuring today

The Lord has spoken against this attitude in our day: "But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned" (D&C 58:29).

We have sustained by uplifted hand our living prophets. We rejoice in the privilege of hearing the revealed word of God in our day from our living prophets. What do we do when we hear them? Do we follow the instructions of our living prophets with exactness, or do we murmur?

Is it easier in our own age to follow a living prophet than it was in the days of Moses or Nephi? Would those who murmured against Moses and Nephi not also murmur today? The same questions can be asked in reverse. Those who murmur today would also have murmured as did Laman and Lemuel or the children of Israel against the prophet of their day with the same disastrous consequences.

Murmuring over "small things"

The simplest of instructions may reveal the tendency to murmur. I attended a meeting once when the presiding authority invited members of the congregation to

come forward in the meeting room. A few stirred. Most did not. Why not?

I feel sure there were those who questioned why they should leave their comfortable position. "Why should I?" That question was, no doubt, followed promptly by an excuse or rationalization as to why it should not matter whether the seat was changed or not. I believe there followed some irritation that the presiding authority should make such a request. The last step, obvious to all who observed, was slothfulness in responding. Few moved. Was that a small thing? Yes. But it reflected a deeper, more profound lack of willingness to obey. It reflected a spirit of disobedience. That is not a small thing.

I was recently in a Church meeting in West Africa when a priesthood leader invited the brethren to come forward and occupy the first three rows of the chapel. Every man immediately stood and moved his seat according to instruction. A small thing? Yes. But it reflected a willingness to obey. That is not a small thing.

I invite you to focus on the commandment from living prophets that bothers you the most. Do you question whether the commandment is applicable to you? Do you find ready excuses why you cannot now comply with the commandment? Do you feel frustrated or irritated with those who remind you of the commandment? Are you slothful in keeping it? Beware of the deception of the adversary. Beware of murmuring.

Willing obedience brings God joy

A fortunate parent experiences that special joy that comes with the willing obedience of his child. Is it not the same with God?

I can understand in some small part how joyful the Lord must be when His servants obey without murmuring. Recently, my dear wife and I participated in a meeting during which our responsibilities were to be explained. We had no idea, at that time, what our assignment would be or where we would be serving. I was privately advised that we would be called to serve in West Africa. I was surprised and delighted with the assignment, but there passed through my mind the thoughts that would inevitably arise in the mind of my companion of almost 39 years. How would she receive this assignment? I knew she would agree to go. In all our years together, she has never refused a call from the Lord. But what would be the feelings of her heart?

As I sat next to her, she discerned in my eyes that I knew our assignment. She said, "Well, where is it?" I simply said, "Africa." Her eyes brightened, and she said with cheerful heart, "Isn't that great!" My joy was full.

So also must our Father in Heaven feel joy when we follow the living prophets with willing hearts. I testify that Jesus the Christ lives. He speaks to prophets in our day. May we follow our living prophets without murmuring, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Richard G. Scott

The power of a strong testimony

In this uncertain world there are some things that never change: the perfect love of our Heavenly Father for each of us; the assurance that He is there and will always

hear us; the existence of absolute, unchanging truths; the fact that there is a plan of happiness; the assurance that success in life is attained through faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to His teachings because of the redemptive power of

His Atonement; the certainty of life after death; the reality that our condition there is set by how we live here.

Whether one does or does not accept these truths does not alter their reality. They are the fundamental building blocks of a living testimony. A strong testimony is the unshakable foundation of a secure, meaningful life where peace, confidence, happiness, and love can flourish. It is anchored in a conviction that an all-knowing God is in command of His work. He will not fail. He will keep His promises.

What a testimony is and what it does

A strong testimony is the sustaining power of a successful life. It is centered in an understanding of the divine attributes of God our Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost. It is secured by a willing reliance upon Them. A powerful testimony is grounded in the personal assurance that the Holy Ghost can guide and inspire our daily acts for good.

A testimony is fortified by spiritual impressions that confirm the validity of a teaching, of a righteous act, or of a warning of pending danger. Often such guidance is accompanied by powerful emotions that make it difficult to speak and bring tears to the eyes. But a testimony is not emotion. It is the very essence of character woven from threads born of countless correct decisions. These choices are made with trusting faith in things that are believed and, at least initially, are not seen.¹

A strong testimony gives peace, comfort, and assurance. It generates the conviction that as the teachings of the Savior are consistently obeyed, life will be beautiful, the future secure, and there will be capacity to overcome the challenges that cross our path. A testimony grows from understanding truth, distilled from prayer and the pondering of scriptural doctrine. It is nurtured by living those truths in faith and the secure confidence that the promised results will be obtained.

Honestly evaluate your testimony

A strong testimony has sustained prophets throughout the ages and fortified them to act with courage and determination in times of difficulty. A powerful testimony can do the same for you. As you fortify your own personal testimony, you will have power to make correct choices so you can stand unwaveringly against the pressures of an increasingly vicious world. Your personal security and happiness depend upon the strength of your testimony, for it will guide your actions in times of trial or uncertainty.

Honestly evaluate your personal life. How strong is your own testimony? Is it truly a sustaining power in your life, or is it more a hope that what you have learned is true? Is it more than a vague belief that worthwhile concepts and patterns of life seem to be reasonable and logical? Such mental assent will not help when you face the serious challenges that will inevitably come to you. Does your testimony guide you to correct decisions? To do so, fundamental truths must become part of the very fiber of your character. They must be an essential part of your being, more treasured than life itself.

How to strengthen your testimony

Exercise faith and live by Jesus' teachings

If an honest assessment of your own testimony confirms that it is not as strong as it should be, how can it be strengthened?

Your testimony will be fortified as you exercise faith in Jesus Christ, in His teachings, and in His limitless power to accomplish what He has promised.² The key words are "exercise faith." True faith has enormous power, but there are principles that must be followed to unleash that power. Moroni taught:

"Faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not be-

cause ye see not, for ye receive no witness until *after the trial of your faith*.”³

That means you must practice the truth or principle you have faith in. As you live it consistently, there will come a witness of its truthfulness through the power of the Holy Ghost. It is often a feeling of peace. It could be a stirring within you. It might be evidenced by opening doors to other truths. As you patiently look for a confirmation, it will come. Recognize that the Lord will give you the capacity to understand and prove through personal experience the truthfulness of His teachings. He will confirm the certainty that His laws will produce the promised results when obeyed willingly and consistently.

Pray with humility and trust

A powerful testimony distills from quiet moments of prayer and pondering as you recognize the impressions that will accompany such effort. Humble, trusting prayer brings consolation, solace, comfort, direction, and peace the unworthy can never know.

Some truths regarding prayer may help you. The Lord will hear your prayers in time of need. He will invariably answer them. However, His answers will generally not come while you are on your knees praying, even when you may plead for an immediate response. There is a pattern that must be followed. You are asked to look for an answer to your prayers, then confirm that it is correct.⁴ Obey His counsel to “study it out in your mind.”⁵ Often you will think of a solution. Then seek confirmation that your answer is right. This help can come from prayer and from pondering the scriptures, at times by the intervention of others,⁶ or from your own capacity, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

At times the Lord will want you to proceed with trust before you receive a confirming answer. His answer generally comes as packets of help. As each piece is

followed in faith, it will unite with others to give you the whole answer. This pattern requires the exercise of faith. While sometimes very hard, it results in significant personal growth. At times the Lord will give you an answer before you ask. This occurs when you are unaware of a danger or may be doing the wrong thing, trusting that it is correct.

Alma showed how fasting and prayer can strengthen your testimony. He stated:

“I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?

“... Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit.”⁷

Study the scriptures

President Romney taught of the testimony-strengthening power of scriptures with this personal example:

“I urge you to get acquainted with [the Book of Mormon]. Read it to your children; they are not too young to understand it. I remember reading it with one of my lads when he was very young. . . . I lay in the lower bunk and he in the upper bunk. We were each reading aloud alternate paragraphs of those last three marvelous chapters of Second Nephi. I heard his voice breaking and thought he had a cold. . . . As we finished he said . . . , ‘Daddy, do you ever cry when you read the Book of Mormon?’

“‘Yes, Son. . . . Sometimes the Spirit of the Lord so witnesses to my soul that the Book of Mormon is true that I do cry.’

“‘Well,’ he said, ‘that is what happened to me tonight.’”⁸

Pay tithes and offerings

Your testimony will be made strong through willing obedience to the law of

tithing and by fast offerings, and the Lord will bless you richly for it.

Resist Satan's efforts to weaken testimony

As your testimony is fortified, Satan will try harder to tempt you. Resist his efforts. You will become stronger and his influence on you weaker.⁹ Satan's increasing influence in the world is allowed to provide an atmosphere in which to prove ourselves. While he causes havoc today, Satan's final destiny was fixed by Jesus Christ through His Atonement and Resurrection. The devil will not triumph.

Even now, he must operate within bounds set by the Lord. He cannot take away any blessing that has been earned. He cannot alter character that has been woven from righteous decisions. He has no power to destroy the eternal bonds forged in a holy temple between a husband, wife, and children. He cannot quench true faith. He cannot take away your testimony. Yes, these things can be lost by succumbing to his temptations. But he has no power in and of himself to destroy them.

Testimony comes line upon line

These and the other truths are certainties. However, your conviction of their reality must come from your own understanding of truth, from your own application of divine law and your willingness to seek the confirming witness of the Spirit. Your testimony may begin from acknowledgment that the teachings of the Lord seem reasonable. But it must grow from practicing those laws. Then your own experience will attest to their validity and yield the results promised. That confirmation will not all come at once. A strong testimony comes line upon line, precept upon precept. It requires faith, time, consistent obedience, and a willingness to sacrifice.

Build testimony on a strong foundation

A strong testimony cannot be built upon a weak foundation. Therefore, don't pretend you believe something when you are not sure of it. Seek to receive a ratifying witness. Wrestle in mighty prayer, living righteously, and ask for a spiritual confirmation. The beauty of the teachings of the Lord is that they are true and that you can confirm them for yourself. Hone your spiritual susceptibility by being constantly alert to the guidance that will come through the still, small voice of the Spirit. Let your Father in Heaven know of your feelings, your needs, your concerns, your hopes and aspirations. Speak to Him with total confidence, knowing that He will hear and respond. Then patiently go forth in your life doing those things you know are correct, walking with confidence born of faith and righteousness, patiently waiting for the response that will come in the manner and at the time the Lord considers most appropriate.¹⁰

Strong testimony expands our capacity

Why was Joseph Smith able to do that which was beyond his personal capacity? It was because of his powerful testimony. That led to his obedience, his faith in the Master, and his unwavering determination to do His will. I testify that as your testimony grows in strength, when needed and earned, you can enjoy inspiration to know what to do and, when necessary, divine power or capacity to accomplish it.¹¹ Joseph Smith perfected his ability to follow the guidance of the Lord by practiced personal discipline. He did not let his own desires, convenience, or the persuasions of men interfere with that compliance. Follow his example.

A consummate power for good

For enduring peace and security, at some time in life, in quiet moments of re-

flection, you must come to know with a surety that there is a God in heaven who loves you, that He is in control and will help you. That conviction is the core of strong testimony.

In a few moments President Gordon B. Hinckley will give the closing conference message. This morning we heard him, as the prophet of the Lord, give sober yet reassuring counsel regarding the challenges we face. He asked that we humbly pray to our Father in Heaven for guidance and strength in combating evil. Our security is in Him and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. I know that the Savior loves you. He will confirm your efforts to strengthen your testimony so that it becomes a consummate power for good in your life, a power that will sustain you in every time of need and give you peace and assurance in these times of uncertainty.

As one of His Apostles authorized to bear witness of Him, I solemnly testify that I know that the Savior lives, that He is a resurrected, glorified personage of perfect love. He is our hope, our Mediator, our Redeemer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Ether 12:6; Hebrews 11:1.
2. See Alma 26:22; Doctrine and Covenants 3:1–10; 82:10.
3. Ether 12:6; italics added.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 6:23, 36; 8:2–3, 10; 9:9.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 9:8.
6. See Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 252.
7. Alma 5:45–46.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1949, 41.
9. See David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1969, 94; or *Improvement Era*, June 1969, 28.

10. See David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1969, 152–53; or *Improvement Era*, June 1969, 117.

11. See Doctrine and Covenants 43:16.

President Faust

As we conclude this conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the combined choir from Utah County, and the brethren of the Melchizedek Priesthood choir, along with their conductors and organists, for the beautiful and inspiring music.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, the Church Health Unit nurses, and the ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Conference Center.

We also express appreciation to local and national media representatives for their coverage of the conference and to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations, cable systems, and Internet service providers who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

As you leave the conference this afternoon, we ask you to obey the traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "God Be with You Till We Meet Again." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Robert R. Steuer of the Seventy. This conference will then be adjourned for six months.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

"God be with you till we meet again"

My dear brothers and sisters, I'm glad we've had with us, today and yesterday, Sister Inis Hunter, the widow of President Howard W. Hunter. We very much appreciate her presence.

Now we come to the close of this great conference. The choir will sing "God Be with You Till We Meet Again" (*Hymns*, no. 152). I'm grateful for that song. It says:

God be with you till we meet again;
By his counsels guide, uphold you;
With his sheep securely fold you. . . .
When life's perils thick confound you,
Put his arms unfailing round you. . . .
Keep love's banner floating o'er you;
Smite death's threat'ning wave before you.
God be with you till we meet again.

I have sung those words in English when others sang them in a score of languages. I have lifted my voice with those wonderful and simple words on memorable occasions on all the continents of the earth. I have sung them in bidding farewell to missionaries, with tears in my eyes. I have sung them with men in battle dress during the war in Vietnam. In a thousand places and in many circumstances over these almost numberless years, I have raised my voice with so many others in these words of parting, sung by people who love one another.

We were strangers when we met. We were brothers and sisters when we said good-bye.

These simple words became a prayer offered to the throne of heaven in behalf of one another.

And in that spirit we bid good-bye as we close what has been a most remarkable and historic conference.

Hopes for resolutions from conference

I hope that as we have heard the brethren and the sisters speak, our hearts have been touched and our resolutions lifted. I hope that every married man has said to himself, "I will be more kind and generous toward my companion and children. I will control my temper." I hope that kindness will replace harshness in our conversations one with another.

I hope that every wife will look to her husband as her dear companion, the star of her life, her supporter, her protector, her companion with whom she walks hand in hand "equally yoked." I hope that she will look to her children as sons and daughters of God, the most significant contribution she has made to the world, her greatest concern with regard to their achievements, and more precious than any other thing she has or could hope for.

I hope that boys and girls will leave this conference with a greater appreciation for their parents, with more fervent love in their hearts for those who have brought them into the world, for those who love them most and are most anxious concerning them.

I hope that the noise of our homes will drop a few decibels, that we will subdue our voices and speak to one another with greater appreciation and respect.

I hope that all of us who are members of this Church will be absolutely loyal to the Church. The Church needs your loyal support, and you need the loyal support of the Church.

I hope that prayer will take on a new luster in our lives. None of us knows what lies ahead. We may speculate, but we do not know. Sickness may strike us. Misfortune may overtake us. Fears may afflict us. Death may place his cold and solemn hand upon us or a loved one.

Regardless of what may come, may faith, immovable and constant, shine above us as the polar star.

Turn to God, and He will not forsake us

Now, today, we are faced with particular problems, serious and consuming and difficult and of great concern to us. Surely we have need for the Lord.

When I went home for lunch, I turned on the television, looked at the news for a moment, and paraphrased in my mind the words of the Psalms: "Why do the nations so furiously rage together?" (see Psalm 2:1). I've lived through all of the wars of the 20th century. My eldest brother lies buried in the soil of France, a victim of the First World War. I have lived through the Second World War, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, and lesser conflicts. We have been a very quarrelsome and difficult people in our conflicts one with another. We so need to turn to the Lord and look to Him. I think of the great words of Kipling:

Far-called, our navies melt away;
On dune and headland sinks the fire—
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!
[Rudyard Kipling, "Recessional,"
in James Dalton Morrison, ed.,
Masterpieces of Religious Verse
(1948), 512]

Our safety lies in the virtue of our lives. Our strength lies in our righteousness. God has made it clear that if we will not forsake Him, He will not forsake us. He, watching over Israel, slumbers not nor sleeps (see Psalm 121:4).

Prayer of benediction

And now as we close this conference, even though we shall have a benediction, I should like to offer a brief prayer in these circumstances:

O God, our Eternal Father, Thou great Judge of the Nations, Thou who art the governor of the universe, Thou who art our Father and our God, whose children we are, we look to Thee in faith in this dark and solemn time. Please, dear Father, bless us with faith. Bless us with love. Bless us with charity in our hearts. Bless us with a spirit of perseverance to root out the terrible evils that are in this world. Give protection and guidance to those who are engaged actively in carrying forth the things of battle. Bless them; preserve their lives; save them from harm and evil. Hear the prayers of their loved ones for their safety. We pray for the great democracies of the earth which Thou hast overseen in creating their governments, where peace and liberty and democratic processes obtain.

O Father, look with mercy upon this, our own nation, and its friends in this time of need. Spare us and help us to walk with faith ever in Thee and ever in Thy Beloved Son, on whose mercy we count and to whom we look as our Savior and our Lord. Bless the cause of peace and bring it quickly to us again, we humbly plead with Thee, asking that Thou wilt forgive our arrogance, pass by our sins, be kind and gracious to us, and cause our hearts to turn with love toward Thee. We humbly pray in the name of Him who loves us all, even the Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and our Savior, amen.

The choir sang "God Be with You Till We Meet Again."

Elder Robert R. Steuer offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop, Mack Wilberg, and Barlow Bradford directed the choir. John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

A combined choir from Utah County provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Steven Kapp Perry directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

Music for the priesthood session was provided by men of the Tabernacle Choir

joined by Melchizedek Priesthood holders from the Salt Lake area. Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

F. Michael Watson

Clerk of the Conference

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